



EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES for INDIVIDUALS with DISABILITIES

Purpose

This program establishes procedures for emergency evacuation of the physically handicapped from classrooms, assemblies, and otherwise occupied buildings at Rhode Island College and its entities. The guidelines set forth in this program are in compliance with *NFPA 101 Life Safety Code*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and *American National Standard A117.1*.

Introduction

Rhode Island College policies and procedures require that all persons evacuate a facility when the fire alarm system is activated. Persons with a disability may not be able to evacuate unassisted. Therefore, they should inform another person that assistance may be necessary during any fire alarm activation.

“Buddy System” Option

It is recommended that everyone make use of the “Buddy System.” During the first week of classes or employment, it is important to make acquaintances with fellow students, residents, class members, or office workers. Talk with them about any special assistance that may be required in the event of a fire alarm (i.e., hearing the alarm, guidance during evacuation, etc.) When the fire alarm sounds, the “Buddy” (or assistant) can help and advise of the location of the person with disability. The buddy or assistant would then go outside and inform emergency personnel that a person in that location needs assistance in leaving the building. Emergency personnel will assist with the evacuation of buildings.

Evacuation Options During a Fire Alarm

Use of the “Buddy System,” along with the following evacuation options, can help to assure the prompt evacuation of any person with disability.

• Horizontal Evacuation

Move away from the area of imminent danger to a safe distance (i.e., another wing, an adjoining building, opposite end of the corridor, or outside if on the ground level).

- **Vertical (Stairway) Evacuation**

Those who are able to evacuate without assistance can use the stairway. Persons with sight disability may require the assistance of a sighted person. Persons who must use crutches or other devices as walking aids will need to use their own discretion, especially where several flights of stairs are concerned. If assistance is needed, please ask for assistance.

- **Stay-in-Place**

Unless danger is imminent, remain in a room with an exterior window and a telephone. Close the door if possible. Call Campus Police at 8201 (outside line 401-456-8201) or 911. Give your name, location and the emergency. The officer will relay the information to on-scene emergency personnel. Phone lines normally remain in service during most building emergencies. If the phone lines fail, the individual can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

- **Area of Refuge**

If the person with a disability cannot get far enough away from the danger by using *Horizontal Evacuation*, then that person should seek an Area of Refuge. Areas of Refuge meet the requirements listed within "**Americans with Disabilities Act, Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (Americans With Disabilities AG)**; section 4.3.11 *Areas of Rescue Assistance*.

Such an area should have the following: 1) 2-way communication, 2) smoke barrier and 3) one-hour fire-rated assembly (i.e., fire-rated door, walls, and ceiling). Specific areas of rescue for each building will be designated by signage at the handicap entrances.

Note: Most stairwells qualify as areas of refuge.

Disability Guidelines: Prior planning and review of emergency evacuation routes are important in assuring a safe evacuation.

- **Mobility Impaired (Wheelchair)**

Persons using wheelchairs should remain in a safe area or move to an Area of Refuge with their assistant when the alarm sounds. The evacuation assistant should then proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the building. Tell emergency personnel the location of the person with a disability. IF the person with a disability is alone, they should phone Campus Police at 8201 (outside phone dial 456-8201) or 911 and give their present location and the assistance needed.

- **Mobility Impaired (Non-Wheelchair)**

Persons with mobility impairments, who are able to walk independently, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. If danger is imminent, the individual should wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. If there is no immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire or unusual odor), the person with disability may choose to stay in the building until emergency personnel arrive.

- **Hearing Impaired**

Campus buildings are equipped with fire alarm horns/strobes that sound the alarm and flash strobe lights. The strobe lights are for hearing-impaired persons. Persons with hearing impairments may not notice or hear emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Rhode Island College is continuously upgrading the fire alarm systems on campus in order to provide a safer community.

- **Visually Impaired**

Most buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm horn/strobes that sound the alarm and flash strobe lights. The horn is for sight-impaired persons. Most people with a visual impairment will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route is likely different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating. The assistant should offer assistance to the individuals with visual impairment and guide them through the evacuation route.

Remember that the Campus Police can be reached by dialing 8201 on a campus phone or by dialing 401-456-8201 by cell phone or other non campus phone.

As with any emergency, you can dial 911 to request assistance.

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