

Provisions for Persons with a Disability

Persons with a physical disability are, in many cases, limited in their ability to evacuate by means of stairwells. It is primarily for this type of disability that the following procedures apply.

For the purpose of fire safety planning, a “physical disability” is that which, even with the aid of Building Emergency Team members, would prevent that person from descending the stairs in an evacuation situation at a rate of speed consistent with the normal flow of other building occupants, or which would cause such person physical harm if they attempted to descend the stairs.

Procedure When an Alarm Sounds

Ground Level - Evacuation

If you can evacuate the building at ground level, a Building Emergency Team member (BET) or a volunteer should escort you to a safe location away from the building.

Above or below the ground floor – Shelter in Place

1. Seek a safe area with or without the assistance of a BET member.
2. When there is a fire alarm, if possible, phone Western Special Constable Services (WSCS) at 911 to inform them of your location, circumstance and intentions. Note that when calling 911 from a cell phone the call will be directed to the regional emergency services so remember to immediately tell the dispatcher your location at Western University so you can be quickly transferred to WSCS here on campus.
3. Tell the communication officer that your fire alarm is sounding but you have a disability and cannot leave your floor area. If you smell smoke, or are in immediate danger, immediately inform the communications officer.
4. The Building Emergency Team (BET) has been instructed to ask and help you to identify the location where you will wait for evacuation. They are not trained to lift and carry you out of the building. Please ask someone to remain in the building with you until trained rescue workers arrive from the fire department. Make sure someone either from the evacuation team or a volunteer has noted your location (which floor and/or stairwell/room number) and that this person will notify the authorities of your need for assistance.
5. Provide the phone number and extension you are calling from. It is **IMPERATIVE** that this number can receive return calls. Note that PAY telephones generally **cannot** receive incoming calls.
6. WSCS has radio contact with officers at the scene and will provide you with updates on the situation via the phone number you provide. In the event that your safety could be compromised, Firefighters will assist in your safe evacuation. At any time, you can also call back for an update.

Note: The London Fire Department and Western Special Constable Service will respond to the scene within 2-3 minutes of a fire alarm.

Whenever possible, the procedures to be taken for the evacuation of a person with disability must be discussed with the individual. Co-workers are also to be informed of these procedures in order to achieve a mutual understanding of the impairment, and the procedures to initiate during an evacuation.

The person(s) with the disability is usually the best judge of his/her abilities and can provide valuable assistance in developing an evacuation plan. Persons having a sensory impairment (blindness, deafness, etc.) or a minor physical impairment can, with the assistance of their Building Emergency Team members, usually evacuate as quickly and safely as other building occupants. If this is the case, they may be permitted to carry out regular evacuation procedures. However, these persons may require at least one Building Emergency Team Member to alert them of the alarm, if necessary, and to assist them to evacuate.

In building fire evacuation exercises (i.e. fire drills), the Building Emergency Team members and persons with a disability are to carry out the actions they would normally carry out in an emergency (i.e., respond to the pre-arranged location on the floor area). In a drill situation, it is not necessary for persons with a disability to evacuate the building completely. This action could in fact pose a danger to these persons and their Building Emergency Team members, as well as for the other occupants of the building.

Upon initiation of a fire alarm, the Building Emergency Team members may respond with the persons with a disability to a pre-arranged location on the floor area that does not block other evacuation traffic.

In all situations, the Building Emergency Team members should ensure that one person is assigned to report to the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Emergency Personnel, immediately upon evacuation, that the floor is clear and the number of persons with a disability, Building Emergency Team members, etc. evacuating at a slower rate and their location, so that assistance may be dispatched if available.

If for any reason the evacuation of a person with a disability must be suspended, and the people involved take refuge on a floor area other than their own, the Building Emergency Team members must make every effort to alert the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or other Emergency Personnel of their location. This can be done by advising other evacuees as they proceed down the stairs, by keeping a watch for would-be rescuers, searchers or fire fighters proceeding up the stairs, by using the telephone, or by waving or shouting from a window to alert bystanders and/or arriving emergency personnel.

The Building Emergency Team members or designated person should immediately advise the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Emergency Personnel when the evacuation of persons with a physical disability has been completed.

It should be noted that telephone communications remain intact in many fire situations and an attempt should always be made to utilize this means of communication to either contact WSCS or the Fire Department.

Occupants who require assistance in evacuating during an alarm are responsible for:

- Advising their Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Western Fire Safety so that a pre-plan can be established;
- Assisting the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Western Fire Safety in appointing Building Emergency Team members;
- Telling their Building Emergency Team members how much help they may need; and
- Practicing the evacuation procedures.

Please send any unanswered questions or concerns to firesafety@uwo.ca