Advice guide 12: Fire Evacuation Guidance

This Guidance is designed to assist disabled students in the event of a fire evacuation. It is of particular relevance to people who use wheelchairs, or have impaired mobility. It is also of relevance to any person who has a disability, which is less obvious, for example, heart problems, arthritis etc., and also those who have impaired sight or hearing.

Refuge Areas
Within University buildings there are areas identified as ‘Refuge areas’, such as stairwells, which are protected from fire for a minimum of 30 minutes. On reaching such a location a person is safe from the danger of fire for sufficient time for them to be evacuated from the building should this be required. Some Refuge Areas have intercoms installed, which are linked to the University’s Security Control Room, a green and white sign with a wheelchair symbol identifies their locations.

Any person who may need to access a Refuge Area during a fire alarm activation should make themselves familiar with their location in advance. Details on the location of Refuge Areas may be obtained from the University’s Health and Safety Office.

Evacuation of Disabled People
The problems encountered by disabled people evacuating a building in the event of a fire will vary with the disability of the individual and the physical configuration of the building. Whatever the parameters of each individual case, in the event of a fire alarm sounding a disabled person should try to leave the building.

Lifts must not be used in the event of a fire evacuation.
If you consider you will encounter difficulty evacuating a building, it is important that you make your Course Tutor and, if relevant, your student accommodation Sub-Warden aware, to ensure that you can be assisted in the event of an evacuation.

Impaired Mobility
If it is not possible for a disabled person to leave a building, they should go to a Refuge Area and arrange for someone to inform the person in charge of the evacuation (from either the University or Fire Brigade) of their location to ensure that, should it be necessary, they are evacuated.
A friend/colleague can stay with a disabled person in the Refuge Area. In addition, if there is an intercom in the Refuge Area, it can be used to confirm the person’s location with the University’s Security Control Room, who will also notify the person in charge of the evacuation.

For more information
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