Advice guide 12: Fire Evacuation Guidance and PEEPS

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.
Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)

STUDENTS

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)

All Teesside University students must be able to leave buildings safely in the event of a fire or other emergency, and the University is committed to ensuring we meet our obligations by providing evacuation support and guidance. We understand that many people with disabilities or other medical conditions will be able to escape unaided; however, some may require assistance. Therefore, we request that you consider your emergency evacuation arrangements in relation to your own needs. If necessary we will draw up a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) with you. A PEEP might for example specify the assistance you need in the event of an emergency evacuation and any precautions necessary, the use of equipment we may issue to you, and/or simply record the action you need to take in an emergency evacuation.

We do not expect you to make any extraordinary effort to exit safely in the event of an emergency. Some of the main types of assistance or equipment typically used and available are outlined on the information sheet enclosed. The equipment you require may vary in different locations and therefore different PEEPs might be needed for different buildings. You may not fall directly into one of the examples given; the objective of a PEEP, should you need one, is to ensure that your individual needs are met – and if necessary, to devise ways of achieving this.

If you feel you may need a PEEP please complete and return the enclosed initial emergency evacuation questionnaire as soon as possible to the Health and Safety Team (healthandsafety@tees.ac.uk). Once you have completed the questionnaire, if we identify that you need a PEEP or if you would like to discuss these matters further, we will arrange a meeting with you. The staff involved in reviewing your requirements and drawing up PEEPs will work with you to find the best solutions. Please note that if you do not reply, you accept that you are able to respond to fire alarms and make your own way out of the building(s) promptly, unaided and without impeding any other person’s emergency escape.
Your confidentiality is important to us and your PEEP(s) will only be disclosed where necessary, as follows:

- Security or Support Services staff
- Your carer(s) or volunteer worker(s), if applicable
- School Disability Coordinator
- Any person assigned specific duties in providing assistance to you under the PEEP (this may include relevant members of staff where necessary)
- The University’s Health and Safety Adviser and Health and Safety Officer (confidential records are held in the Health and Safety Centre).

PEEPs should be reviewed at least annually – if you have received one previously, we will need to verify that it is still adequate.

Please let me know if you require this letter or any other related documentation in an alternative format.

Thank you for your co-operation in these important matters, and for the opportunity to optimise our fire evacuation arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Westcough
Health and Safety Adviser
INITIAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

This questionnaire is intended to be completed by any person who may require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). A member of the Health and Safety Team will review this information and where required will assist in the development of a suitable PEEP. If you prefer not to answer the question overleaf then that is your choice, however, please be aware that if you do not provide information which is necessary for the development of your PEEP then the Health and Safety Team may not be able to develop a suitable and sufficient plan.

Once developed the PEEP will be the accepted means of escape for you in the event of an emergency evacuation (including drills). If you consider there to be significant issues raised by this process that will require attention please contact the Health and Safety Centre for assistance in finding suitable solutions.

1. Why you should fill in the form?

Teesside University has a legal responsibility to protect you from fire risks and ensure your health and safety at work. To do this properly we need to know if you require information about our emergency evacuation procedures and if you need assistance during an emergency.

2. What will happen when you have completed the form?

You will be contacted by the Health and Safety Team and provided with any additional information necessary about the emergency evacuation procedures in the building(s) in which you work/study. The Health and Safety Team may request a short meeting to discuss your needs.

If you need additional assistance, the PEEP will specify what type of assistance you need. It will be the responsibility of your School/Department to ensure you are provided with this assistance.
Please read the letter and information sheet accompanying this questionnaire.

Name ___________________________________________________

Date ___________________________________________________

Job Title ___________________________________________________

School/Department __________________________________________

Signature___________________________________________________

You may need a PEEP if you have a disability or medical condition, such as those listed below which may affect your ability to evacuate a building unaided:

- Auditory impairment
- Visual impairment
- Cognitive impairment
- Mobility impairment

When considering your answer, consider if you are able to:

- Become aware of the need to evacuate
- Evacuate promptly without impeding the escape of other persons
- Evacuate without causing distress to yourself or others

Do you feel that you have a disability or medical condition that would impact on your ability to evacuate promptly and safely? YES/NO

If you answer YES to the above question, please return this form to healthandsafety@tees.ac.uk

A member of the Health & Safety Team will then contact you to discuss this matter in more detail and ascertain the requirements of your PEEP.

(If your answer is NO, no further action is required and you do not need to return this form)

If you require more information on the University PEEP procedures or have any other questions relating to this, please contact the Health & Safety department or you may wish to view our PEEP’s procedure.
Information on the assistance available to persons with medical conditions that may be utilised in the development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)

**Mobility Impairment:** The majority of Teesside University buildings have disabled refuges in locations such as staircases and lobbies. These are protected from fire for at least 30 minutes. An intercom (wall-mounted panel) connects to Security Officers in the Security Control Room, who are automatically aware of your location, *even if you cannot hear them over the noise of the fire alarm*; you are immediately a top priority. They are also aware of exactly where the incident is located, and therefore the risk to you. In many cases staff managing the evacuation will decide you should remain safely where you are, alternatively they may “horizontally evacuate” you to another safe location in the building; or it may be necessary to assist you to leave the building.

One method we employ is the “Evac chair”; we will need to ensure via your PEEP (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan) that you can safely transfer to it, or find other ways to meet your needs. Note that on your way a disabled refuge point, you may find automatic fire doors shut which you normally encounter held open.
**Visual Impairment:** Most staircases have colour-contrasted markings on the steps. If you require assistance descending stairs, one possibility might be a “buddy system” whereby designated people nearby will assist you; another option might be to use a disabled refuge as described above.

**Hearing Impairment:** Some locations have flashing beacons in addition to fire alarm sirens or bells. Vibrating pagers or pillows, which respond to a fire alarm activation, can be issued. “Buddy systems” as described above might also be suitable.

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**Student Residences on Campus:** Campus Services (Accommodation) are aware of all rooms allocated to persons with disabilities. In the event of a fire or other incident, Students with PEEPS are a top priority (as for disabled refuges – see above). You can be assured that if you are in any danger, a member of staff will arrive to assist you. If there is no danger to you (e.g. false alarms) they will visit or contact you whenever possible for reassurance – but please note that so long as you are safe, they may have other immediate priorities.

**Temporary PEEPS as a result of medical conditions, injury, pregnancy etc:** Pregnant women, persons with sports injuries, for example broken limbs, persons recuperating from operations/treatment or those with other medical conditions might also need assistance (and therefore a PEEP) in order to evacuate safely.

**Fire Marshals & Security Staff as additional reassurance:** Please note that many University buildings have appointed Fire Marshals. In an evacuation, they will “sweep” designated areas of a building to ensure that no persons remain. They may be able to offer you assistance; at the very least, they will inform Security or Health and Safety staff who will then assist you.

Security Officers proceed immediately to investigate the location of a fire alarm activation identifying where the potential danger is. Having found the cause, they will then investigate the immediate area. Therefore, if you are having difficulty evacuating or have not found your way to a refuge, and if you are in immediate danger from a fire, you will rapidly be found and assisted. However, a properly planned PEEP will greatly reduce the risk to you and those assisting you still further.
Typical Standard Emergency Evacuation Plans
for persons with Medical Conditions

The following list gives an indication of types of escape arrangements/methods our PEEPS consider, and the possible assistance typically available. These can vary in different circumstances. In most cases the options set out below will form the basis of individual Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS), according to each person’s needs and, where possible, preferences. In some cases a combination of several of these options will apply.

The use of mobile phones should not be discounted but emergency evacuation provisions must not rely on them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Buddy system</td>
<td>Companion, carer or assistant allocated to assist. This is a voluntary provision and may not always be feasible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meet assistant at refuge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meet assistant at Workstation</td>
<td>Only practicable with a ‘buddy system’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Make own way down stairs after main flow dissipates</td>
<td>Appropriate for those that can evacuate themselves slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Use of Evac-Chair</td>
<td>Training on the use of Evac-Chair can be provided to those assisting with evacuations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Individual cannot transfer readily to Evac-Chair</td>
<td>Assistance may need to be provided by more than one member of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Individual needs assistance to walk down stairs, 1 or 2 people</td>
<td>Only practicable with a ‘buddy system’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Needs colour contrast on staircases</td>
<td>Most University Buildings have this provided; check whether contrast meets persons individual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Person needs showing escape routes</td>
<td>School / Department to arrange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistance required for person and guide dog</td>
<td>Utilise ‘buddy system’</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Person needs doors opening</td>
<td>Utilise ‘buddy system’ or investigate providing additional push pads</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Person needs large print information or alternative format</td>
<td>Can be provided on request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Identification of escape route</td>
<td>Assess/predetermine most suitable escape route(s) from intended location. Health and Safety can advise on means of escape routes when required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Provision of flashing beacons</td>
<td>Some buildings/locations are provided with these. Additional coverage will be considered where required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Provision of vibrating pager, pillow or alternative alarm</td>
<td>Can be provided when necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Horizontal evacuation</td>
<td>Will be implemented wherever possible. For example evacuating to another disabled refuge in the same building away from the incident.</td>
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