

Academic Support Office

RU EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The following emergency evacuation description is written primarily to inform faculty, staff, and students of the procedures for assisting students with disabilities in the event of an emergency. However, if you have a disability, you must take personal responsibility for your own safety.

In addition to the procedures described in detail below, we encourage you to identify primary and secondary routes to exits, stairwells, or other safe areas in buildings where you will take classes.

It is also important at the beginning of each semester to discuss these procedures with each instructor, so you and the instructor are clear about what needs to be done in case of an emergency. Read and review this information and know what is expected in each classroom, building, and residence hall in case of an alarm.

Ground floor

On a ground-level floor, people with physical disabilities should evacuate via accessible exits along with the other occupants of the building.

Above or Below Ground Floor

RU Public Safety should be notified immediately if there is a person with a mobility impairment on an above- or below-ground floor.

It is best to call (instead of 911) because it connects directly to the University Police Department.

Individuals with Mobility Impairment

Because elevators should not be used for evacuation during a fire alarm, people with mobility impairments will need assistance in evacuating unless they are on a ground floor with accessible exits.

As people with mobility impairments have varying degrees of impairments, information is offered for two possible scenarios.

Ambulatory

People with mobility impairments who are able to walk independently, including those who use crutches or a cane, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency situation with minor assistance. Even those who customarily use a wheelchair or scooter for long distance travel may be able to walk independently in an emergency.

If danger is imminent and the person is able to walk downstairs with some assistance, we advise that they wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting to evacuate. Someone should walk beside the person with a disability to provide assistance, if needed.

If it is apparent that there is no immediate danger, the person may choose to stay in the building until emergency personnel arrive and determine whether they need to evacuate.

In situations of false alarms or a small fire, evacuating people with mobility impairments may not be necessary at all; however, only qualified emergency personnel should make this decision.

Non-Ambulatory

Evacuating people who are not able to walk can be more complicated.

If there is no immediate danger, the person with a disability should proceed or ask for assistance to the nearest exterior stairwell or safe area of refuge to await emergency personnel.

RU Public Safety should be contacted () to alert emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability.

When possible, someone should remain in the facility with the person with the disability while another individual exits the building and notifies emergency personnel of the person with a disability's exact location.

If emergency personnel determine that there is a need to evacuate a person, trained rescue professionals will assist in the evacuation.

Only in situations of extreme and immediate danger should untrained people attempt to evacuate a wheelchair user. There is significant risk to the person with a disability especially if the person has limited control of their body, is more prone to broken bones, or uses apparatuses such as respirators or catheters. Additionally, untrained people attempting to evacuate a person with a disability are at risk of injury, especially if attempting to carry a power wheelchair.

If danger is imminent, the person with a disability is the best authority on how they should be moved. Ask before you attempt to move someone!

While it is best to let the professional emergency personnel conduct the evacuation, a person with a mobility impairment can be carried by two people who have interlocked arms to form a chair or by carrying the person in a sturdy office chair.

Individuals with Vision Impairment

Most people with vision impairments should be familiar with their immediate surroundings. In the event of an emergency, tell the person with a vision impairment the nature of the emergency and offer to guide the person to the nearest emergency exit.

Have the person take your elbow and escort him or her out of the building. As you walk, tell the person where you are and advise of any obstacles. When you reach safety, orient the person to where they are and ask if any further assistance.

Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing may not perceive audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted to the situation by gestures or by turning the light switch off and on.

Emergency instructions can be given by verbalizing or mouthing, or by a short, explicit note.

Example:

“Fire alarm! Go out south doors now!”

It is appropriate to offer assistance to a deaf or hard of hearing person as you leave the building.