

**SUBJECT: EVACUATION PLANNING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**DATE: May 2006**

## **I. PURPOSE / DESCRIPTION**

San José State University endeavors to proactively address issues facing our disabled community. To that end, the Human Resources and the University Police Department (UPD), in conjunction with the Accommodations Review Board (ARB), have developed the following guidelines to coordinate the university's response to the needs of our disabled community in emergency situations. These guidelines are intended to assist the collaborative efforts of faculty, administrators, staff, health and safety personnel, and students in the effective evacuation of persons with disabilities from university facilities during an emergency.

Risk and Compliance within the Human Resources is entrusted with primary responsibility for facilitating change and monitoring implementation of these guidelines. However, responsibility for successful implementation will require cooperation among the University Police Department, Facilities, Development & Operations, the Office for Equity & Diversity, and the Disability Resource Center (DRC), with support from the Office of the President and the Office of the Provost.

It must be noted, however, that any university employee assisting with any emergency procedure is only expected to take those actions that are reasonable and commensurate with their individual level of knowledge, skill, and physical ability to properly and safely perform a given task. These guidelines do not dictate a duty of care for any campus department or individual, unless that duty is compelled by law.

## **II. PROCESS**

- A.** Identify and train Senior Building Coordinators and Building Emergency Teams to assist in evacuations of individuals with disabilities. Develop and practice evacuation routes and "Safe Areas" or Building Assembly Points.<sup>1</sup> Assess the need for any evacuation assistance devices and familiarize staff with any equipment needed to evacuate safely. **Responsibility: University Police Department.**
- B.** Test smoke detectors, fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting (flashlights are the responsibility of each department), etc., to ensure proper function when needed. **Responsibility: Facilities, Development, and Operations in concert with DRC.**
- C.** Identify and train individuals with disabilities who may need assistance in the event of an evacuation. Consult and train disabled individuals on techniques for safe evacuation and

<sup>1</sup> To ensure that routes and "Safe Areas" are wheelchair accessible.

teach skills on how to communicate these techniques to others and develop “buddy” systems for those who may require assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation.<sup>2</sup>

**Responsibility: Disability Resource Center.**

- D. Ensure that identification of individuals with disabilities for evacuation purposes comports with the ADA and the EEOC protocol.

**Responsibility: Office of Equal Opportunity.**

- E. Draft and disseminate policy and guidelines for evacuation planning to campus community.

**Responsibility: Accommodations Review Board and University Police Department.**

- F. Conduct annual training on Evacuation Plan for campus community, including training for persons with disabilities to train others. Post and distribute information on evacuation routes.

**Responsibility: University Police Department, Office of Equal Opportunity/Human Resources, Disability Resource Center.**

### III. APPLICATION: ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED PERSONS

For the purposes of these evacuation procedures, individuals should be considered disabled if they are unable to evacuate the building without assistance, or if their time to exit the building would be much greater than the average building occupant. Under this policy, any situation in which building occupants are evacuated from a building will be considered an “emergency” situation for disabled persons. Any situation in which a disabled individual can communicate that a clear and present danger exists will be considered an “emergency” under this policy.

### IV. IDENTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The EEOC has declared that employers may request information to help identify individuals who might need assistance because of a medical condition and may share this information with others in the workplace. Obtaining and appropriately using information necessary for a comprehensive emergency plan will not violate the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Federal Rehabilitation Act.

According to the EEOC, the university may ask individuals whether they need assistance during an emergency and, if so, specifically what type of assistance is needed. There are three ways the university may obtain this information:

1. After making a job offer, but before employment begins, the university may ask all individuals whether they will need assistance during an emergency.
2. The university also may periodically survey all current employees or students to determine whether they require assistance in an emergency. The survey must indicate that self-identification is voluntary and explain that the information received will be used solely for the development of the Evacuation Plan.
3. The university/DRC may ask individuals with known disabilities if they will require assistance in the event of an emergency.

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<sup>2</sup> Share this information with UPD and update on a semester basis, noting this list only includes individuals registered with the DRC.

Prior to any disclosure, individuals will be informed that any information they provide will be kept confidential and shared only with those who have responsibilities under the Evacuation Plan. Exceptions to the ADA's confidentiality requirements may be made for first aid and safety personnel, medical professionals, emergency coordinators, Building Coordinators, Building Emergency Team officers who need to confirm that everyone has evacuated, and other non-medical personnel who are responsible for ensuring safe evacuation. These individuals are entitled to the information necessary to fulfill their responsibilities under the emergency evacuation plan.

## **V. ESTABLISHMENT OF BUILDING ROSTERS**

Senior Building Coordinators should be aware of disabled persons within their area. In concert with the DRC,<sup>3</sup> Senior Building Coordinators should maintain a record of building occupants with disabilities who are unable to evacuate without assistance. These records should include the name, location, and any identifying information of those needing assistance to ensure that assistance can be rendered should evacuation be necessary. This information should be updated each semester. A member of the Building Emergency Team should be assigned to assist each disabled person in an emergency. This person should be someone working in close proximity to the disabled person and should assist the disabled person to a predetermined Building Assembly Point or "safe" area.

UPD will determine the method of evacuating disabled persons from Building Assembly Points (BAP). Where disabled students, faculty, staff, or visitors may be present, procedures should be implemented so that nominated staff can assist such persons. During evacuation, disabled persons should be assisted to BAP areas, which should be adjacent to fire isolation stairs. Where possible, procedures should provide for alternative BAP areas. If no BAP area is available, it may be necessary to move disabled individuals into fire-isolated stairways. This should not be done until other people have been evacuated, so as not to impede a smooth evacuation. The Building Emergency Team should inform the Senior Building Coordinator of the number of disabled persons, the location and the nature and extent of their disability at the completion of the general evacuation of the floor. The Senior Building Coordinator should advise UPD/Fire Service, on its arrival, of the situation on each floor. The UPD/Fire Service will determine what further action should be taken for the safety of disabled persons and whether lifts can safely be used for their evacuation.

## **VI. PROCEDURES FOR ASSISTING DISABLED INDIVIDUALS**

### **A. Mobility Impaired (Wheelchair)**

While campus emergency personnel strive to provide as much care and relief as possible, including providing assistance, subject to limitations, with the physical evacuation of those who are mobility impaired, it must be recognized that specifically trained professional fire and paramedic personnel are the emergency first responders that are ultimately responsible for any physical rescue or evacuation requiring the lifting and carrying of an individual.

Persons using wheelchairs should proceed to the Building Assembly Point with their "buddy" when the alarm sounds. The evacuation "buddy" should then immediately proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the building and advise the Senior Building Coordinator of the location of the disabled individual. If the disabled person is alone, she/he should dial

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<sup>3</sup> Again, it is important to note that this list will only provide the names of individuals registered with the DRC.

extension 4-2222, or 911, and advise the Campus Police and Safety Department of her/his location.

If a wheelchair cannot be moved with its occupant (e.g. a motorized chair with heavy batteries), move the individual to a safe location where she/he will be as comfortable as possible until mobility is restored. Be sure there is shelter and adequate back support. Never lift a wheelchair by its armrests. Always ask the person how to proceed before attempting any move. This step should only be undertaken when police or fire personnel are unavailable and there is immediate danger for the individual with a disability.

Reunite the person with his/her wheelchair as soon as it is safe to retrieve it. Be aware that some individuals have minimal ability to move. Lifting or moving them too quickly may be dangerous to their well-being. It may be necessary for trained rescue responders to bring the person out of the building. If this is the situation, the person must be brought to a BAP to wait for assistance.

## **B. Mobility Impaired (Canes, Crutches or Walkers)**

If immediate evacuation is necessary, ask the person what assistance she/he prefers. Stair evacuation chairs are located in most multi-story university buildings. Do not use an evacuation chair unless you are trained—improper use can result in injuries to both those assisting and those being assisted. Contact the Senior Building Coordinator immediately for assistance. Use evacuation chairs only for life-threatening emergency situations.

Persons with mobility impairments who are able to walk independently may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. Untrained personnel should NOT evacuate mobility-impaired persons unless the situation is life threatening. If danger is imminent, the individual should move to a “safe” area and wait for trained personnel. If someone is in imminent danger and cannot be moved to a “safe” area to wait for assistance, it may be necessary to evacuate him/her using a two-person lock-arm position, or having the person sit in a sturdy chair (preferably with arms); this evacuation should only be undertaken by individuals who have had rescue training. Before taking action, always ask the individual their preferred method of assistance. If there is no immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire, or unusual odor), the person with a disability may choose to stay in the building using the other options until emergency personnel arrive.

Someone using a crutch or a cane might be able to negotiate stairs independently. One hand is used to grasp the handrail, the other hand is used for the crutch or cane. In this situation, it is best NOT to interfere with the person's movement. To assist, offer to carry the extra crutch. Also, if the stairs are crowded, act as a buffer and "run interference." Mobility aids (i.e.: canes, crutches, walkers, etc.) should NOT be left behind if at all possible, and should be returned to the owner immediately upon reaching safety.

## **C. Non-Ambulatory Persons**

Most non-ambulatory persons will be able to exit safely without assistance if they are on the ground floor. For floors above the ground level, the needs and preferences will vary. Some people have minimal ability to move; lifting them may be dangerous to their well-being especially if they may have no upper trunk or neck strength to assist in being carried out. Frequently, non-ambulatory persons have respiratory complications; check to see if the person relies on electric artificial respirators. If so, they should be given priority assistance if there is smoke or fumes. Check the evacuation routes for obstructions before assisting the person to exit. Delegate other volunteers to bring the wheelchair or scooter.

Always consult the person as to her/his preferences regarding:

- Ways of being moved and the number of people necessary for assistance
- Whether to move or extend extremities when lifting
- The need for a seat cushion or pad, if removed from the wheelchair
- The need for a stretcher, chair, or paramedic attention

#### **D. Hard of Hearing**

Most buildings on campus are equipped with high intensity loudspeakers/strobes that sound the alarm and flash strobe lights. The strobe lights notify hard of hearing persons that evacuation is necessary. Persons with hearing impairments may not notice or hear emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Communicate by writing a note or simple hand gestures. A "buddy" should offer assistance to the individual with a hearing impairment and guide her/him through the evacuation route or to the BAP.

Persons who are hard of hearing may not perceive an emergency exists. When assisting individuals with hearing impairments, the following warning techniques can be employed:

- Flick the lights off and on repeatedly when entering the room or work area to get the person's attention.
- Establish eye contact with the individual, EVEN IF an interpreter is present.
- Stand in a well-lit area; do not turn away; NEVER chew gum or cover your mouth.
- Use facial expressions and hand gestures as visual cues.
- Check to see if the person understands, and repeat if necessary.
- Offer pencil and paper. Write slowly, and let the individual read as the message is written. Written communication may be especially important if the individual's speech is difficult to understand.
- Do not allow others to interrupt you while conveying the emergency information.
- Be patient. The individual may have difficulty comprehending the urgency of your message.
- Provide the individual with a flashlight for signaling her or his location in the event that he/she is separated from the rescuing team or "buddy," and to facilitate lip-reading<sup>4</sup> in the dark.

#### **E. Visually Impaired**

Most buildings on campus are equipped with high intensity loudspeakers/strobes that sound the alarm and flash strobe lights. The horn notifies visually impaired persons that evacuation

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<sup>4</sup> Never assume that an individual with a hearing impairment has the capability to read lips. It is important to note that individuals trained in lip-reading correctly interpret only 30% - 40% of the information communicated.

is necessary. Most people with a visual impairment will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route could be different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating a building. A "buddy" should offer assistance to the individual with visual impairment and guide her/him through the evacuation route or to the BAP. If the individual is unable to access the evacuation route, the "buddy" must notify the Senior Building Coordinator immediately.

When assisting people with vision impairments, there are some basic rules to follow in order to be effective.

- Announce oneself; speak out when entering the work area.
- Speak naturally and directly to the individual and NOT through a third party. Do not shout.
- Offer assistance, but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Describe, in advance, the action to be taken.
- Let the individual grasp an arm or shoulder lightly for guidance. She/he may choose to walk slightly behind the individual providing assistance; be sure to mention stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, etc.
- When guiding to a seat, place the person's hand on the back of the chair.
- If leading several individuals with visual impairments at the same time, ask them to hold each other's hands.
- As you walk, inform the person where you are and advise of any obstacles (e.g. overhanging objects, uneven pavement, curbs, etc.)
- Individuals may have guide dogs that become disoriented during the evacuation and may require additional assistance.
- When you have reached the BAP, orient the person to where he/she is and ask if any further assistance is needed.
- White canes should NOT be left behind if at all possible and should be returned to the owner immediately upon reaching safety.

***Suggestions for assisting persons with guide dogs:***

- Do not pet or offer the dog food without the permission of the owner.
- When the dog is wearing its harness, it is on duty. If circumstances dictate that the dog is not supposed to guide its owner, ask the owner to remove the dog's harness.
- Plan for the dog to be evacuated with the owner.
- In the event you are asked to take the dog while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the dog's harness.

After exiting the building, ensure that individuals with impaired vision are not “abandoned” but are led to a place of safety by the senior building coordinator and/or her/ his designee who should remain with them until the emergency is over, if possible.

## **F. Learning Disabilities**

People with learning disabilities may have difficulty in recognizing or being motivated to act in an emergency by untrained rescuers. They may also have difficulty in responding to instructions that involve more than a small number of simple actions at one time. Some specifics to be aware of when assisting individuals with learning disabilities include:

- The person's visual perception of written instructions or signs may be confused or misread/interpreted.
- The person's sense of direction may be limited or disoriented, requiring someone to accompany him/her.
- Directions or information may need to be broken down into simple steps. Be patient.
- Simple signals and/or symbols should be used.
- Directions/procedures for evacuation may need to be repeated more than once for clarity and understanding. The person's facial expressions will indicate whether or not they understand the directions/procedures instructed and will determine if the instructions should be repeated.

## **VII. EVACUATION TECHNIQUES FOR LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS**

### **A. The Carry Techniques**

**TO BE USED ONLY IN LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, WHERE DEATH OR SERIOUS BODILY INJURY IS IMMINENT.**

#### **1. One-Person Carry Technique (The Cradle Lift)**

The Cradle Lift is the preferred method, when the person to be carried has little or no arm strength. It is safer if the person being carried weighs less than the carrier.

#### **2. Two-Person Carry Technique (The "Swing Carry" or "Chair Carry")**

To use this technique:

- Carriers stand on opposite sides of the individual.
- Wrap individual's closest arm around one partner's shoulder.
- Grasp carry partner's forearm behind the individual in the small of the back.
- Reach under the individual's knees to grasp the wrist of carry partner's other hand.
- Both carry partners should then lean in close to the individual and lift on the count of three.
- Continue pressing into the individual being carried for additional support in the carry.

- When assisting a wheelchair user, avoid putting pressure on the person's extremities and chest. Such pressure might cause spasms, pain, and/or restrict breathing. Carrying someone slung over one's shoulders (something like the so-called "fireman's carry") should be avoided.

## **B. Wheelchair Evacuation**

### **TO BE USED ONLY IN LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, WHERE DEATH OR SERIOUS BODILY INJURY IS IMMINENT.**

Wheelchairs have many movable weak parts that were not constructed to withstand the stress of lifting (e.g. footplates, wheels, moveable armrests). Do not use parts to lift the chair.

#### **1. Manual Wheelchairs**

When descending stairs, stand behind the chair grasping the pushing grips (if they exist). Instruct the person to tuck the head to the chest if the wheelchair is dropped backwards. Tilt the chair backwards until a balance is achieved. Descend frontward. Stand one step above the chair, keeping center of gravity low and letting the back wheels gradually lower to the next step. Be careful to keep the chair tilted back. If possible, have another person assist by holding the frame of the wheelchair and pushing in from the front. (When assisting individuals in a wheelchair, take the chair through backwards when trying to go over a bump over the floor or a change in threshold (as in doorways) to avoid the person being thrown from the chair.) Do not lift the chair as this places more weight on the individual behind. If it is possible, strap the disabled person into the chair with a large belt or elastic band or piece of clothing. Be sure to discuss this process with the individual prior to implementation.

**THIS IS A DANGEROUS PROCEDURE AND SHOULD ONLY BE USED AS A LAST RESORT.**

#### **2. Power Wheelchairs**

Power wheelchairs may have heavy batteries that are difficult to remove. If possible ask the person if they can transfer to an evacuation chair so that they can be moved immediately; the person should bring with them their seat cushion or pad. If it is not possible to remove the person from the chair, wait for assistance. If attempting to move a power wheelchair, remove the batteries – make sure first that the footrest is locked, the motor is off, and the chair is in neutral gear. If the battery is not heavy, the wheelchair may be moved with little difficulty.

If the person is removed from his/her wheelchair, the chair should be retrieved as soon as possible. The wheelchair is essential to the person's mobility. Inform the police or fire personnel of the location of the wheelchair to be retrieved. Once the person reaches safety, they may need paramedic assistance.

## **VIII. EVACUATION VERIFICATION**

There are two general methods of verifying that all people have completed the evacuation or relocation process. One method is to take a roll call at the location where evacuees are sent. The other method is to conduct a post-evacuation search of evacuated areas.

## **A. Roll Call**

The roll call method may be acceptable for certain facilities; however, for the majority of buildings it has several major limitations. In a large facility, it will be difficult to keep evacuated people grouped by tenancy or by floor, which is needed if a roll call will be feasible. Also, if building tenants do not track the location of each employee, individuals who are home sick, on vacation or out of the office at a meeting may be listed as missing. Finally, this method cannot account for visitors, clients or customers who may be in the building when an incident occurs. This method is most appropriate in facilities with secured access, where all occupants must sign in and out, so there is an accurate record of who is in the building.

## **B. Post-Evacuation Search**

The post-evacuation search method overcomes the limitations of the roll call method. Rather than attempting to verify the location of every known occupant, this method focuses on the evacuated areas of the building. University police and fire personnel (regulatory components) should be contacted to determine under what conditions the building emergency team may conduct such a search, and when the regulatory components must conduct the search. The primary limitation to this method is that a search may not be feasible in an area near the initial incident. However, regulatory components may have special equipment and training to enter areas that would not be safe for emergency team members. In cases where Building Emergency Team members will be conducting searches, they must be familiar with the building layout and must be trained to conduct a thorough search. Areas such as restrooms, soundproofed rooms, and rooms containing noisy equipment are examples of spaces where people may miss the evacuation order and therefore warrant special attention.

## **IX. EVACUATION LOCATIONS**

For any evacuation or relocation strategy, the location should be identified. The area should be safe from the emergency, located to avoid conflicts with control and mitigation efforts, and be large enough to accommodate the number of people being moved. When occupants are directed to leave the building, they should be given a specific destination so crowds do not gather immediately outside the building exits. Such crowds could obstruct later evacuees, hinder arriving fire or rescue personnel, and be exposed to falling glass or other debris.

Two examples:

- Occupants evacuated from the building should proceed to the Seventh Street parking garage. If the parking area is full or unavailable, occupants should proceed down Seventh Street to the Event Center.
- Occupants on the floor of the fire alarm, the floor below, and the two floors above should proceed to the exit stairs and travel down four floor levels, unless otherwise directed.

Evacuated people will obviously need to remain away from their regular location for the duration of the emergency. However, in most cases when all or part of a building is evacuated, people will not need to remain at the evacuation site for long. People can simply be sent home if it becomes apparent that the incident will prevent re-entry to the building that day.