

# PRACTICAL FIRE SAFETY GUIDANCE:

## THE EVACUATION OF DISABLED PERSONS FROM BUILDINGS

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
	Page
Introduction And Scope	2
Legislative Responsibility	4
Planning For The Evacuation Of Disabled Persons	6
Building Features	12
Evacuation Plans In Practice	15
Managing Reasonable Adjustments	18
▪ Mobility Impaired People	18
▪ Hearing Impaired People	22
▪ Visually Impaired And Blind People	24
▪ People With Cognitive Impairment	26
Appendix 1 Record Of Individual PEEP	28
Appendix 2 Examples Of Standard PEEPs	30
Appendix 3 Evacuation Options	31
Appendix 4 Specimen Letter And Evaluation Questionnaire	35
Appendix 5 Specimen Reception Sign	38
Appendix 6 Reference Material	39

# INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

We all know that in the event of fire, dialling 999 will summon the Fire and Rescue Service. While the Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for fighting fires and protecting life and property in the event of fire, we all have a role to play in minimising the risk from fire, but if one does start, we all want to know that we can escape from premises safely.

Under fire safety legislation in Scotland, it is the responsibility of those persons who have control of, or safety obligations in respect of non-domestic premises, to ensure that arrangements are in place for an evacuation of the premises, if the situation requires it. This responsibility cannot be delegated to the Fire and Rescue Service. Each building should have an emergency fire action plan specifying the evacuation procedures for **everyone**, including disabled people, likely to be in the building.

This document provides information and guidance on fire evacuation of disabled persons from buildings and will assist employers, organisations and fire safety enforcing authorities to consider disabled persons in a positive way and to deal with their evacuation in a practical, equality based manner.

This guide is issued by the Scottish Government and supported by the Disability Rights Commission (Scotland) and HM Fire Service Inspectorate (Scotland). The guide and its contents constitute guidance given by the Scottish Ministers in terms of section 61(2) of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. It is generic guidance and should be seen as supplementary to the series of Scottish Government guidance documents which are aimed at offering fire safety advice for different types of premises. All documents can be accessed on the firelaw website at [www.infoscotland.com/firelaw](http://www.infoscotland.com/firelaw).

The guide is not intended for dwellings or for premises which, as part of their normal operation, provide care and treatment to disabled persons on a regular basis, such as hospitals and care homes. Nevertheless much of the content will be of interest to people who manage care or treatment premises.

The guide deals only with evacuation issues but persons with fire safety obligations in respect of non-domestic premises need to be aware that the wider aspects of fire safety law that need to be considered within premises will also apply to disabled persons such as fire prevention, risk

reduction practices and operation of the emergency fire action plan. It should not be assumed that disabled persons will have a passive role in the event of a fire.

# LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

There are three areas of law that are relevant to the evacuation of disabled persons: fire safety law; health and safety law; and disability discrimination law.

## Fire Safety Law

For the purpose of this guide, fire safety law comprises the requirements imposed by Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended, and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006. This law is enforced principally by the Fire and Rescue Services. Under this law it is the responsibility of an employer and other dutyholders who have control of, or safety obligations in respect of non-domestic premises, to carry out a fire safety risk assessment, take adequate fire safety measures and keep the assessment under review. Fire safety measures include formulating an emergency fire action plan with evacuation arrangements for all people likely to be in the premises, including disabled people; keeping escape routes clear and available for use at all times; and providing appropriate signage and adequate illumination. Dutyholders are responsible for implementing the emergency fire action plan and for nominating persons to assist with implementing the plan, including the evacuation of persons from the premises. Further information about the range of fire safety responsibilities, the scope of the fire safety legislation and the type of premises covered is available at [www.infoscotland.com/firelaw](http://www.infoscotland.com/firelaw).

## Health And Safety Law

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations are relevant to issues regarding manual handling by staff members and the general safety of employees, visitors and other persons. Further information is available on the Health and Safety Executive website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

## Disability Discrimination Law

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) imposes duties on service providers and has changed the way organisations manage public access. It is unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably than others, and the law requires 'reasonable adjustments' to policies, procedures and the physical environment. This requirement is anticipatory – it is not acceptable to wait until an issue arises. In light of the DDA, building

managers should already be working towards best practice in disability access and should look to apply some of their learning to fire evacuation policy.

Since December 2006, public bodies in Scotland have been covered by the Disability Equality Duty (DED) which requires that policies are assessed for their impact on equality for disabled people and combating discrimination. Key public bodies such as local authorities are required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme setting out what they will do and how they will monitor progress. In essence, the DED requires public bodies to design out disability discrimination at the start of the policy planning process, including fire evacuation policy.

Further guidance on the DDA and the Scottish code of practice for the DED are available on the Disability Rights Commission website at [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org).

## **General**

The focus on access into premises to enable disabled people to fully use a building, needs to be matched with arrangements for their safe egress in the event of fire. The safe egress and evacuation of disabled people requires careful consideration and attention. Where an employer or a service provider does not make provision for safe egress and evacuation arrangements for disabled people from their premises, this is likely to constitute a failure to comply with the requirements of fire safety law and may be an offence. It could also be considered to be disability discrimination under the DDA.

# PLANNING FOR THE EVACUATION OF DISABLED PERSONS

Planning for evacuation is about planning for exceptional circumstances and disabled people are no different from anyone else in that they prefer to be in control of their own evacuation. As much as possible the aim should be to allow disabled people independent evacuation: not all people who have an impairment will require assisted evacuation.

Arrangements for the evacuation of disabled persons should be compatible with the general evacuation strategy and the emergency fire action plan for the premises. The responsibility for implementing the plan and evacuating persons safely in the event of an emergency will rest with dutyholders: **an evacuation plan for disabled persons must not rely upon the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Service to make it work.**

An evacuation plan for disabled persons is commonly known as a PEEP: a Personal Emergency Egress Plan or Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. The plan explains the method of evacuation to be used by a disabled person in each area of a building. It should not be assumed that because a person is disabled that they will need or ask for a PEEP. Some will be confident that they can get out of the building unaided. Also it should not be assumed that people with 'hidden impairments' such as a heart condition or epilepsy, and who normally would not have an access problem, might not require assistance in an emergency situation.

The following principles should guide the preparation and implementation of a PEEP:

- The same rules of courtesy and respect apply to disabled and non-disabled people alike. Disabled people should not be treated as a "health and safety" problem to be resolved;
- See the person not the disability: needs and preferences vary widely between individuals;
- Disabled people should be meaningfully involved at all stages in the development and review of their PEEP; and
- In an evacuation, ask, don't assume, when determining what assistance a person might need. The individual disabled person best understands the nature of his or her impairment.

## Communication And Training

Good communication and appropriate training for staff and management regarding the fire or emergency evacuation process are vital to ensure success. It is important therefore that staff and managers fully understand the evacuation plan and fire safety strategy for the building so that they can render maximum assistance to a disabled person irrespective of the nature of their impairment. Provision of a fully integrated PEEP system will improve safety for everyone using the building whilst identifying any weaknesses in any existing evacuation plans.

All staff involved in the process of providing evacuation plans should have a good standard of equality awareness and disability awareness to ensure that they do not inadvertently discriminate against disabled people. Additional training provided will depend on the role of each individual but may include:

- Disability awareness;
- Disability evacuation etiquette;
- Moving, lifting and handling techniques;
- Good practice in communication, including use of communication systems;
- Appreciation of fire-resisting enclosures; and
- Importance of using pre-planned routes.

Staff have a vital role in communicating the evacuation plan to disabled visitors and the attitude and awareness of staff is important. Information should also be provided within staff handbooks.

All staff using a building should be aware of the fire safety measures and strategy. For example, if the building has fire compartmentation to allow horizontal evacuation into another fire compartment, people operating the plan should understand this. Staff involved in the evacuation plan should fully understand their role (including where the function is outsourced), should feel confident in their skills and disabled people should feel that they can trust the process.

Where staff members have specific roles, it is important that should persons leave or be absent, that their role is allocated to another suitably trained person either permanently or for the period of absence.

Systems and equipment used for evacuation, such as pagers, will need a system of regular checks or testing.

## **Individual Plans**

An individual plan is a plan for employees and regular users of a building such as residents, contractors or students who require special provision to ensure their safety in the event of fire. This is written by management on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the individuals concerned, is tailored to their individual needs and includes detailed information of their movements during an evacuation. It may be necessary to provide a plan for each building and room that they visit. Once agreed, a copy should be kept by the disabled person concerned, the dutyholder and any other person who requires to know the content of the plan. Appendix 1 contains a layout example for the recording of an individual PEEP.

## **Standard Plans**

There is a difference in the way that an evacuation plan is provided where the person requiring the assistance is a visitor to the building or is an infrequent customer using a service as opposed to staff members or regular visitors. It is more difficult to organise an evacuation plan for people who are casually visiting a building or using a service on a one-off basis. However, by assessing the difficulty in evacuating premises and the types of evacuation that can be provided within the building, it will be easier to address needs. Where it is not possible to provide a bespoke plan for each person, a system of standard plans may be used.

Standard plans are written procedures that can be used as options for disabled people to choose from. Copies of the plans are held at reception points within the building and are advertised and/or offered to people as a part of the entry or reception procedure. A disabled person requiring assisted evacuation is offered options for their assistance and given suitable instructions.

Where standard PEEPs are used local disabled peoples' organisations may be a source of information to assist in creating the plans (particularly for disabilities such as dual sensory impairment and autism spectrum disorders, where communication needs specialised support).

Examples of standard PEEPs are contained in Appendix 2.

## **Evacuation options**

Appendix 3 to this guide contains a reference list of evacuation options and references these against different categories of disabled people.

These categories are used to assist with referencing information, but in practice persons must be considered on an individual basis as individual persons with individual needs. These options can be matched to the information about the building, the fire safety measures and fire safety strategy to assist with the production of a standard PEEP or an individual PEEP. The options can be used as a guide and discussion tool to establish what might be offered when working in partnership with a disabled person to establish what is appropriate for each person in their evacuation plan, but they can be adapted to suit particular situations.

The provision of plans should also take account of disabled persons' movements within the building, the operational procedures in the building, and the evacuation assistance that can be made available.

A person may require different options for different buildings. For instance, a visually impaired person may be able to find their way out of a building that has good orientation standards and is uncomplicated, but in a complex building where there is poor signage and orientation they may need assistance. The options are not mutually exclusive, a disabled person may use a combination of these options. Assumptions should not be made that each option suits all. Managers should be prepared to discuss with disabled people what options there are and what provision they can make.

## **Consultation**

Once the person responsible for preparing an individual plan has contacted the disabled person an interview should be organised to establish suitable evacuation procedures. Disabled people need to be consulted about their evacuation plan. They should be given information about the fire safety measures and building systems and their opinions and experience should be sought and respected. It is essential that the disabled person is asked relevant questions and in a way that produces the best evacuation plan. A suitable plan should be negotiated taking into consideration what the building, management and disabled person can offer.

The person working with the disabled person to write the plan should not make assumptions about the abilities of the disabled person. It should not be automatically assumed that a disabled person cannot leave the premises independently. Most disabled people are likely to have a very clear idea of what it will take to get out of the building. In some instances, the person will be able to facilitate their own evacuation, especially if suitable aids and adaptations are provided. Different buildings may have

different levels of adaptation and a disabled person may use different methods of evacuation in different buildings.

Disabled people are expected to assist the planning process by giving any information necessary for the safe execution of the plan and promote facilitating their own evacuation. In order for disabled people to be willing to volunteer information, managers should recognise disabled peoples' dignity and right to independent egress and provide as much information as possible to everyone about the plans for disabled people. This will encourage disabled people to be more frank in their approach when they contribute to the establishment of their own evacuation plan. Disabled people may need assurances that if they volunteer what they might do in an emergency this will not constitute grounds for removal of support at other times. Negotiation skills, sensitivity and discernment are required here on the part of the person planning a PEEP.

Where a disabled person can make their evacuation unaided it may take them longer than the time taken for non-disabled people to evacuate in the event of fire and they should be given the opportunity to take the safest route which offers them the longest period of safety. This may be through an adjacent fire compartment which has a fire-resistance rating and down an escape stair from this area. Estimating the approximate time required to achieve the disabled person's evacuation will contribute to the planning process along with the amount of staff support required for each evacuation. However a fire situation may render a particular escape route unusable and where there is more than one escape route provided from premises, any of those escape routes may require to be used by disabled people.

Employers are responsible for ensuring that employees are provided with suitable evacuation plans. Disabled staff should be offered a suitable evacuation plan during their induction process or where there is any change of circumstances to the person's ability to make their way out of the building. In educational establishments etc., disabled children or students should be provided with a plan if they need one, as part of enrolment. Appendix 4 contains an example of a letter and questionnaire which an employer could use to establish personal needs and for record keeping.

## **Assisted Evacuation**

Disabled people who require their evacuation to be facilitated will need to be advised of the options available to them. In some instances, they will need to be given assistance to evacuate. Those disabled people who

require assisted evacuation should have a pre-arranged meeting place. If the disabled person is likely to move around the building a communication process will be necessary between the assistant and the disabled person so they can arrange to meet at a particular location.

## **Co-ordination**

A co-ordinating role is necessary in order to ensure that any plans provided are understood throughout the organisation. The nomination of a Disability Contact for each premises may be appropriate. Different members of the organisation may be responsible for ensuring that there is provision and maintenance of evacuation plans for disabled people using the service and to report back to the co-ordinator. In addition, a system is required to ensure regular review and updating of plans. Line managers should take responsibility for ensuring that the PEEPs for their staff are kept up to date. Disabled people should be advised to tell the person of any change to their circumstances.

Plans for each building and their occupants need to be co-ordinated. This is especially important where there is the potential for a number of people to be evacuated to ensure that there is no conflict. In multi-occupied buildings, where responsibility may rest with a number of persons for each occupying organisation there are potential problems if evacuation plans and strategies are not coordinated. It is therefore important that dutyholders co-operate and co-ordinate their evacuation plans for disabled persons as part of their requirement under fire safety law to co-operate and co-ordinate aspects of fire safety.

## **Practising Evacuation**

In order to ensure that the plans run smoothly, training should include practice. Evacuation practice will depend on the type of evacuation required. Generally, evacuation should be practised on a regular basis and at least six monthly, regardless of the frequency of fire drill in the premises. All of the people involved in the evacuation plan should take part, however there will be exceptions: it may be more appropriate to simulate carry-down so as to avoid unnecessary injury to the disabled person. Where a disabled person has elected to make an exceptional effort to get out un-aided it is not practical for them to require regular practice, but timing a short section of the escape may help in establishing how long a full evacuation might take.

# **BUILDING FEATURES**

Some building adaptation may facilitate evacuation and reduce the need for personal assistance. Fire safety measures such as fire compartmentation, automatic life safety suppression systems (such as sprinklers) and automatic fire detection may extend the time available for disabled people to make their own evacuation or leave with assistance.

## **Lifts**

Purpose designed evacuation lifts and fire-fighting lifts have features and safeguards which may allow their use in the event of fire. Other lifts are not normally considered suitable for fire evacuation purposes.

During a fire incident, once the Fire and Rescue Service is in attendance, it may operate a lift override system to use a lift to access the fire. As a result all lifts in the building for Fire and Rescue Service use may return to the fire service access level and park. Once this happens it is not possible to call lifts as they will be under the control of the Fire and Rescue Service. Fire-fighting lifts may therefore only be used in the early stage of the evacuation process in agreement with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Where evacuation lifts are used, disabled people should make their way to the lift point and use the communication system to contact the person co-ordinating use of the lifts, such as security personnel, so that they are aware of the floor that the disabled person/people is/are waiting on. There may also be a communication point whereby the co-ordinator can be contacted by any disabled persons in a temporary waiting space adjacent to the lift. BS 5588: Part 8 contains information on evacuation lifts.

In some buildings horizontal evacuation to an adjacent compartment may be used prior to the use of an ordinary lift (see paragraph on Fire Compartmentation). However the potential use of an ordinary lift for fire evacuation must be pre-planned and only be considered where the outcome of the fire safety risk assessment establishes its use in a fire as appropriate.

## **Doors**

Some people may have difficulty opening self-closing fire doors. These doors and their self-closing devices (including those that are normally

held open by devices linked to the fire alarm system) should comply with the recommendations of the appropriate British Standard regarding opening and closing forces. Such doors are designed to hold back smoke and fire to protect the people in a building and facilitate their evacuation.

Doors which are fitted with automatic opening for accessibility may have the opening facility disengaged automatically in a fire situation by a link to the fire alarm system. This is likely to be the case where the door is a fire-door. This needs to be considered and disabled people informed that these doors, which they may normally be able to negotiate without difficulty, may pose a difficulty in the event of fire or operation of the fire alarm.

## **Open Risers**

Open risers on stairs may not pose difficulty where the stair is being used for descent only, but when ascending a stair open risers on the stair can cause difficulty. Some people are at risk of trapping the toes of their shoes beneath projecting nosings and tripping as a result.

## **Stair Enclosure**

The fire-resisting construction of escape stairs will offer protection to persons using the stair and this increases the available escape time. This reinforces the importance of building occupiers keeping self-closing fire doors in the closed position and observing good housekeeping practices.

## **Fire Compartmentation**

Some buildings are divided into separate fire compartments and it may be possible to evacuate people horizontally through the building into another fire compartment and away from the emergency situation. Where such evacuation is not available on the affected floor it may be available on a lower floor and this may be more acceptable than travelling all the way to a ground floor designated exit point.

## **Temporary Waiting Space**

Disabled people should not always be required to wait for the main flow of people to be completed. Where a person may need to rest or they feel uncomfortable with people behind them, it may be appropriate to design a plan that allows resting in temporary waiting spaces provided along the

route. However if they are likely to cause obstruction to other people leaving the building it may be safer if they follow the main flow.

A temporary waiting space (often described as a refuge) is an area that is separated from a fire by fire-resisting construction and provided with a safe route to a storey exit, thus constituting a temporarily safe space for disabled persons.

People should **not** be left in a temporary waiting space to await for the Fire and Rescue Service. A temporary waiting space can be used as a safe resting place as well as a place to wait during evacuation until the necessity for a full evacuation is established. A temporary waiting space may be equipped with a communication point.

Many temporary waiting spaces within stairs can accommodate only one wheelchair. This should not be a problem where there is more than one wheelchair user provided that there is a suitable evacuation strategy in place. As one person progresses on their journey the next person will take their place in the temporary waiting space.

# EVACUATION PLANS IN PRACTICE

Visitors to a building may fall into two categories: those that are invited to a building such as clients attending meetings with members of staff, as opposed to casual visitors who attend of their own volition. The system of standard plans can be presented to them on arrival by the reception service. Visitors should always be offered an evacuation plan but staff should not be concerned if a person who has an apparent disability does not accept one. It is possible that the person is confident that they can make their own evacuation. This can be the case for wheelchair users. Plans should be provided in a manner which encourages people who have conditions such as asthma, heart disease, epilepsy or mental health problems to ask for assistance, if they wish to do so. Some people may have difficulty in evacuation situations that they would not have normally, such as people who have asthma may be affected in smoky conditions caused by a fire or people who might be affected by the stress of an emergency.

The approach should be to enable people to ask for a plan, when needed, without them feeling it will affect the provision of the service to them. Requesting a suitable evacuation plan should not result in a restricted use of the building. Appendix 5 contains an example of a simple reception sign advising of the availability of an assisted evacuation service.

## Groups Of Visitors

Part of the booking procedure for groups should include provision of standard plans. Where there is a large number of disabled people, the group organiser may play a role in the provision of plans. An appropriate contact point for each group of people visiting a building should be established depending on the nature of the organisation. This may be a main reception point or via the meeting booking procedure or via the person or department that they are visiting.

Where there are security and porter services these can provide a support role and allocate standard plans for visitors. They may also provide assistance in some instances.

Function and conference organisers will be responsible for ensuring that disabled people attending conferences or meetings within the building are provided with a suitable plan. It is important that booking forms invite delegates to identify needs. When a room is booked a standard

procedure should be to check if there are disabled people attending. If so a suitable evacuation plan is required.

## **Public Access Buildings**

In some public access buildings such as museums, art galleries and shopping centres there will be little or no control over the people who are present in the building and it may be impossible to know how many disabled people are present at any one time or the nature of their impairment. However where a system of standard plans is established training for staff is vital as they will have to provide assistance and advice to disabled users of the building if an incident occurs. Staff will need to understand the different evacuation options available to communicate these effectively to disabled people during an emergency and provide further assistance if required.

## **Sleeping Accommodation**

Where sleeping accommodation is provided such as in a hotel, the check-in procedure should include the offer of a suitable evacuation plan (whether the room is specially adapted or not). Additional information for disabled persons may be required in each room adjacent to the evacuation procedures for all residents. Some disabled people who use hotel or other residential sleeping accommodation may not need an adapted room but may need support to evacuate. Therefore a sign should be displayed at reception and alongside the evacuation instructions in each room. For blind persons and those with a visual impairment, the receptionist could explain the instructions after the person has checked in and provide them with a copy of these instructions in Braille or tape (as a reasonable adjustment). Evacuation instructions displayed in each room should be made available in other accessible formats. Where disabled persons require a high level of physical assistance, meeting or hotel rooms with easier egress routes should be priority booked.

## **Assistance**

Where staff assistance is required, sometimes this will be by staff within the department concerned. It is also likely that provision of volunteers to provide assistance to disabled staff members will be readily recruited from their peer group. Where local staff are not available contact should

be made with the person responsible for the building so that a suitable alternative can be set up.

Volunteers will want to be sure that in helping a disabled person to evacuate, their own safety is not compromised. It may be necessary to raise the awareness of staff so that they understand that their own safety will not be compromised. Clear information should be provided to volunteers about facilitated and assisted evacuation systems. It would also be supportive to potential volunteers to assure them of the organisation's commitment to their continued training and support.

It may be necessary to recruit and train additional staff to provide assistance during an evacuation. In considering staff that may provide assistance in an evacuation it is important to consider their work time availability, location in a building or on a site and whether they are employees of another company providing an outsourced facility. Another consideration in utilising outsourced employees is the need to ensure that their managers are fully in agreement with their involvement in an emergency plan and the person concerned is fully conversant with the work culture and policies of the workplace or site.

Where there are Fire Wardens or Fire Marshals, they have a role to play. In order to provide back up where there is an assisted evacuation system in place it is also necessary for the Fire Wardens or Fire Marshals in that building to be aware of who is present and what plans are in place. They should then be trained to provide suitable assistance where necessary. Where there is extended evacuation, a Fire Warden or Fire Marshal should report to the person in charge of the evacuation that a disabled person is slowly making their way out of the building. This information must then be passed onto the Fire and Rescue Service on its arrival.

# MANAGING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Disabled people are individuals with individual needs and each person should be treated accordingly. When developing a plan, there is often a tendency to over-play the safety issue to the detriment of the independence and dignity of disabled people. What a disabled person is prepared to do in exceptional circumstances may differ significantly from what they should reasonably manage in their every day activities, especially if basic reasonable adjustments, such as those suggested below, have been made. Evacuation plans for disabled people should be prepared with the view that what is required is for 'the real thing' and should consider what is practical and achievable in exceptional circumstances. This level of effort required of a disabled person may not be acceptable for a practice or known false alarm or in every day activities. This means that solutions, which may not be appropriate in most circumstances, could be used.

Disabled people may be more willing to facilitate their own evacuation when they know that this is not going to be required of them during a practice or for a known false alarm. Some disabled people are put at a risk of injury when being carried down. It is therefore necessary that in these cases, the evacuation policy should include a method of minimising the need to evacuate for known false alarms.

Some disabled people may have more than one impairment and their needs may be quite distinctly different. For example a person with dual sensory impairment (deafblind) may have needs quite distinct from persons solely with visual impairment or hearing impairment. The disability groupings used below are broadly generic, the matrix in Appendix 3 uses a wider description.

## **Mobility Impaired People**

There is a wide range of people who fit into this category. Issues relating to this group of people may also be relevant to people who have heart disease, asthma or heart conditions. The preferred options for evacuation by people with mobility impairment are horizontal evacuation to outside the building; horizontal evacuation into another fire compartment; or vertically by evacuation lift, eventually arriving at a place of safety outside the building.

The ability to evacuate within a short timescale may not be possible. Many people will be able to manage stairs and be able to walk longer

distances especially if short rest periods are built into the evacuation procedure. Reasonable adjustments such as suitable handrails to support them may be of great benefit though some people will only be able to use a handrail if it is on the side appropriate to them. Some persons may prefer to shuffle or slide down the stairs after the main flow of people.

There are types of mechanical equipment that exist to move people up or down stairs, however, timing and obstruction of escape routes for others are prime considerations if considering using this type of equipment for evacuation.

Wheelchair users normally have difficulty to evacuate when on a floor other than an accessible level. However, some people who frequently use a wheelchair may be able to walk slightly and therefore be able to assist with their own evacuation or even achieve independent evacuation. Assumptions should not be made about the abilities of wheelchair users and they should be consulted about their preference.

If horizontal evacuation or the use of a lift is not available, the person may require assistance from one or more people or it may be necessary to carry the person down (or up) an escape stair.

## **Carry Down Techniques**

There are a number of methods that may be appropriate for carrying-down people with mobility impairment using two, three or four people. All the carry down techniques require a risk assessment (including a manual handling risk assessment) and training for the carriers. Important issues to consider are the availability and physical capability of carriers and whether the width of the stair is sufficient for all of the team to move freely and safely.

An evacuation chair looks like a deckchair with skis and wheels underneath and is manoeuvred by one or two people. When placed on the stairway it slides down the stair. The wheels at the back facilitate movement on the flat, but these chairs are not suitable for long distances. Disabled people may not feel confident using these chairs and it is not always possible for wheelchair users to transfer into an evacuation chair or to maintain a sitting position once seated in one. Therefore, evacuation chairs should not be considered as the automatic solution to the evacuation requirements of disabled persons.

The provision of evacuation chairs needs to be accompanied by a full system of evacuation for disabled people with operators that are trained and familiar with the equipment. Regular practice should take place. In most instances practice should not include the disabled person, although some may wish to practise being moved in the evacuation chair. It is more appropriate for the people who are trained to use the evacuation chair to play the role of the disabled person during practice, this will increase their confidence in using the equipment.

Where used, the device may be allocated to a particular person and either kept alongside their work location or in the most suitable temporary waiting space close to them.

Where a visitor requests this method of evacuation and a device is available along with persons to assist, the person who is responsible for booking them into the building should arrange for one to be brought to the most suitable point of the building for the duration of the visitor's stay.

In buildings where there is open public access, it may be advisable to provide evacuation chairs at suitable points within the building. One on each staircase at each level may be an expensive option. However, provision of these on the top floor of the building with a system that allows them to be immediately brought to the temporary waiting space may be an acceptable solution dependent upon the fire safety measures in place and the circumstances of the case.

It may be possible to move a person down a stairway in a number of ways, while they remain in their wheelchair. Carry-down with two, three or four persons can be done by holding the wheelchair at one of the rigid points in each corner of the wheelchair. The team then lift and move up or down the stair. The person should be moved after the main flow of people. However some types of wheelchair are not suitable for carry-down, for example large motorised chairs.

With some wheelchairs it is possible to tilt the chair on its axis so that it is virtually weightless on the stair. With either one or two people holding onto the chair by a fixed point at the rear of the chair the wheelchair can be manoeuvred down the stair allowing the weight of the person to take the chair down the stairs. A minority of wheelchair users are able to make this "wheelies" manoeuvre unaided but generally, it is only practical on a short flight of stairs. Where it is considered practical, individuals should be consulted about their willingness to use this method and staff should be trained in assisting these manoeuvres. In all such scenarios it is important that where possible the dignity of the person should be

maintained, this is likely to enhance a swift egress. **Staff should ask rather than assume.**

Carry-down using an office chair is facilitated in a similar way as when using a wheelchair. Any stable office chair can be used, although preferably one that has armrests.

People who use electrically powered wheelchairs may have less mobility than people who use manual chairs. However, there will be exceptions to this rule, so it is important to consult the disabled person. If there is no suitable lift to facilitate their evacuation, the wheelchair may need to be left in the building due to its weight and size. This will mean that some other method of carrying the person down stairs will be required. This may involve equipment such as an evacuation chair. However persons with limited mobility may require more assistance when leaving the building and this may be difficult if the person is heavy.

## **Alternative Methods**

Some people may find it difficult or impossible to transfer from their wheelchair into an evacuation chair or other evacuation aid: a hoist may be required to assist with this movement. The process can be difficult and suitable training is required. In these cases a risk assessment of the use of lifts within the building for evacuation purposes may find that this solution presents less of a risk. Where the use of lifts is considered appropriate, consideration could also be given to the location of workstations or points of service used by disabled people to facilitate egress.

When writing a plan with someone who has a mobility impairment, or uses a wheelchair, the provision of reasonable adjustments and the following information should be considered:

- The provision of handrails on escape routes;
- Whether handrails are on one or both sides;
- How far the distance of travel is on particular routes;
- The provision and extent of fire compartments;
- The provision of evacuation chairs;
- The location of any lift that can be used in the event of a fire; and
- Availability of staff assistance.

Questions to ask during an interview with a mobility impaired person:

- Can you walk aided or unaided down the stairs?
- How far can you walk unaided?
- Can you shuffle or slide down stairs?
- If so, how many flights can you manage and would this be increased where assistance was made available?
- How many people would you need to assist you?
- How many times might they need to stop to rest?
- Would handrails be of use in assisting your evacuation?
- Are there positions along the escape route where aids might assist you?
- How might your mobility be worsened, such as by smoke, etc.?
- Is your wheelchair electric powered, or manual?
- Can you be carried in your wheelchair?

## **Hearing Impaired People**

It should not be assumed that a hearing impaired person cannot discern the operation of the fire alarm sounders. However, some hearing impaired and deaf people will need to be alerted to the fact that an evacuation is in progress. Where the fire alarm has audible sounders or a voice alarm system present they may not be able to discern the alarm or any information being broadcast. If sound enhancement systems are provided within a building it may be possible to transmit the message through that system, such as a hearing loop or radio paging receiver.

Flashing beacons and vibrating pagers are examples of reasonable adjustment and either can be used as part of the fire alarm system to alert hearing impaired people to an evacuation. Pagers can also be used to communicate with other people who are part of an assisted evacuation system. The pagers can be used to inform people that there is a need to escape and also tell them in which direction they should travel: however pagers cannot always be provided. Visual warning may not be appropriate in all buildings, for example where there are other lighting conflicts. Where aids are not available then a suitable buddy system will be required and should be implemented on a formal basis. A buddy system may be the suitable method for alerting a hearing impaired person to the operation of the fire alarm.

Where other staff alert hearing impaired or deaf people to the need to leave a building, they should be trained in deaf awareness. Often Fire Wardens or Fire Marshals sweep a building to ensure that there is no

one left on the floor. These staff can be trained to look for signs that a hearing impaired person is present who may not have heard the alarm. When checking, Fire Wardens or Fire Marshals should not rely on a vocal call and should be trained to physically check all areas for which they have responsibility.

Staff should be aware that a person who does not react in a logical manner during an evacuation may not be aware of the alarm. Shouting louder may not help. It may be necessary to explain what is happening with signs, a written note or a pre-prepared short written instruction.

Some hearing impaired and deaf people do not use English as a first language. It is important that a plain English translation of the fire action is provided. It may also be an advantage to this group of people for a pictogram to be provided to support the written information. Deaf people may prefer to have instructions explained to them using British Sign Language (BSL).

Care should be taken to ensure that deaf or hearing impaired people who are working alone in a building know what is happening. In these instances, it may be imperative that a visual alarm system or vibrating paging system is installed.

When writing a plan with someone who has a hearing impairment or who is deaf, it should be established if any of the following are, or could be made, available:

- Visual warning in the fire alarm system;
- Telephone Network – text-phone;
- Vibrating Pager;
- Team Member;
- Fire Wardens; or
- Appointed Buddy.

Questions to ask during an interview with a hearing impaired person:

- Will you be in the building out of hours?
- Will you ever be alone in the building?
- Can you discern the fire alarm throughout the building?
- Do you work as part of a team or in a group environment?
- Do you have a dedicated text number?
- To what extent do you move around the building?

## **Visually Impaired And Blind People**

Good signage and other orientation aids will assist the evacuation of people who are visually impaired. Most visually impaired people have some sight and they may be able to use this during the evacuation in order to make their own way out of the building as part of the general exodus. Where the physical circumstances are appropriate they may have no problems leaving a building.

Using existing elements within the building may help a visually impaired person to facilitate their own evacuation: features of good building design with reasonable adjustments such as good colour contrasting; handrails on escape stairs; contrast to the nosings on the stair treads; markings on escape stairs; colour contrasted or different texture floor coverings on escape routes; or way finding information. Orientation aids, tactile information and audible signs may further reduce the need for assistance. Where audible signals are used, any potential interference by the fire alarm operation needs to be considered. Good colour definition and accessible signage will help visually impaired people to use a building. Extending these systems to include the escape routes can reduce the need for assisted evacuation.

Improving circulation and orientation can be of great benefit. Logical routes to escape stairs will not only assist visually impaired people but will be of benefit to all users of the building. Where there is a lack of orientation information, staff assistance may be necessary to provide guidance out of the building.

A person with dual sensory impairment may require a very different approach to that from someone who is blind because of the need to consider additional communication.

Where a person is assisted by a guide dog they may prefer for the dog to assist them out of the building. Others will prefer to take the responsibility away from the dog and request a human assistant. In these cases, a buddy should be allocated to the person. It may also be necessary to provide a person to look after the dog.

A visually impaired person may not easily locate exit signs or be aware of the travel direction to get out of the building but they may remember their way out along the route that they entered the building. Using the escape routes as part of the general circulation space within the building will mean that visually impaired people will become more familiar with these routes and this may assist in the event of evacuation.

Visually impaired people may not be able to read the fire action notices provided in most buildings, as these are often in small typefaces. Instructions could be made available in Braille, large print or on audio-tape. It can be useful to provide a tactile map of the escape routes and to provide orientation training to visually impaired staff so that they are more aware of the options for evacuation. Tactile maps and large print can be obtained through a number of organisations that provide accessibility information services. It may also be possible to produce large print in-house.

Visually impaired people in particular may have difficulty on stairs with open risers and these should be avoided on escape routes. Where these are present then there may be a need for assistance or adaptations to the stairs to make them safer. Alternatively a different stair may be available.

When any internal physical changes are made in a building, such as the construction of partitions or the rearrangement of office furniture, it is important that these changes are made known to visually impaired people in the building.

When writing a plan with someone who has a visual impairment, the following information should be considered:

- The type of fire alarm system available;
- Marking of escape routes;
- Orientation information;
- If fire instructions are in accessible formats;
- Whether escape routes and stairs have step edge markings;
- Provision of handrails on the escape routes and stairs;
- Whether stairs have open risers; and
- Whether there are external open escape routes.

Questions to ask during an interview with a visually impaired person:

- Do you work alone in the building?
- Do you work out of hours?
- Are you aware of the positions of all of the escape routes?
- Can you use escape routes un-aided?
- Do you work as part of a team or in a group environment?
- To what extent do you move around the building?
- Can you read the evacuation instructions? If not what format do you need them in?

## **People With Cognitive Impairment**

People with cognitive impairment often have problems comprehending what is happening in an evacuation or may not have the same perception of risk as non-disabled people.

Some people with conditions such as dyslexia, dispraxia or autism may not be aware of their impairment. Many people with a learning disability also have other impairments: some may have mobility difficulty and some may have impaired vision and hearing loss. Some people with cognitive disabilities may move more slowly than the main flow and there may be a need for a slow and fast lane in the escape stair if the stair width allows this.

It may not be possible to tell that a person has an impairment that affects their ability to orientate themselves around the building and staff should be aware of this and be tactful when assisting a person who may seem lost or unsure of what to do during an evacuation.

The key elements are staff awareness, having someone to help, familiarity with routes of travel and providing a simple to use built environment.

The most effective assistance is to have someone to help, but not every person with a cognitive impairment will have a support worker or assistant with them, so efforts should always be made to enable the disabled person to understand how to leave the building rather than assuming that a helper will take this role.

There is unlikely to be a single system that would be equally effective for all. Orientation information and colour coding of escape routes can be useful. Consistency of colour is important though some will not benefit from colour coding. They may have difficulty in eliciting the right information from some signs (there is evidence that some people with cognitive impairment use both symbols and words on signs). They may need to have the evacuation plan read and explained to them. A video or DVD explaining and demonstrating what to do in an emergency can also be an advantage as can a photographic explanation of the route.

Signage may only be part of the process to help people with cognitive impairment find their way: building features and building layout are also important. Use of escape routes for general circulation is an advantage

as there may be reluctance by some to take an unknown route from the building.

Practice of the route options can dramatically reduce the requirement for staff assistance. Practice is essential for some persons (where assistance is required) especially in situations where one person is responsible for a number of others, say, in a classroom situation. People with a learning difficulty may need to practise their routes for escape frequently, perhaps on a monthly basis. If so this should be written into their PEEP.

When writing a plan with someone who has a cognitive impairment, it may be as relevant to determine what they understand and to develop the plan based on how they will find the escape routes and what reasonable adjustments they may require. The following information should be considered:

- The type of fire alarm system available;
- Marking of the escape routes;
- Orientation information;
- Fire instructions provided in accessible formats;
- Step edge markings on the escape stairs;
- Handrails on the escape stairs;
- The need for two speed traffic on the stair and whether the stairs are wide enough to allow this;
- If stair risers are open; and
- Whether there are external open escape routes.

Questions to ask during an interview with a person with cognitive impairment:

- Do you work alone in the building?
- Do you work out of hours?
- Do you know what the fire alarm sounds like?
- When you hear the fire alarm do you know where to go?
- Do you work as part of a team or in a group environment?
- Are you likely to move around the building?
- Can you read the escape instructions? Do you understand them? If not what format do you need them in?

## Record of Individual Personal Emergency Egress Plan

Persons Name:

Work Location:

Alternative work positions:

Reason why a PEEP is required:

Date plan created:

Plan created by:

[Indicate whether there are separate plans provided for this person for other locations or situations.]

### Awareness of procedure

A copy of the evacuation procedure has been issued in the following format:

• Braille	• In large print
• Electronic format	• The escape routes have been pointed out
• On tape	
• It has been explained in BSL	

The method of alert in an emergency is by:

- The existing fire alarm system
- Pager
- Visual alarm system
- Members of the work team (*Each named person will require a copy of this sheet*)

- The fire wardens on the floor (*The fire wardens require a copy of this sheet*)

Names \_\_\_\_\_

### **Getting out**

Assistance is required from \_\_\_\_ people

Names \_\_\_\_\_

Backup \_\_\_\_\_

(Each of these people requires a copy of this sheet)

The following is a description of the egress plan

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Specialist equipment to assist evacuation is:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Practice Dates**

Practices should be every \_\_\_\_ months, dates should be put into diaries

## Personal Emergency Egress Plan Record Sheet Examples For Standard Plan

### Standard evacuation plan

#### Assistance from 1 person Meet assistance in temporary waiting space

**Circumstances:** Sight is limited and/or orientation is difficult

**Evacuation Procedure:** The person you are visiting will take you to a temporary waiting space, which is within the escape stair at each level of the building. A member of our fire evacuation team will meet you there and assist you out of the building.

Features to assist the evacuation:

---

Fire Warden checks  
Temporary waiting space

### Standard evacuation plan

#### Carry down by three persons

**Circumstances:** Mobility impaired. Can walk along the flat but cannot manage stairs at all. Need to be carried down stairs.

**Evacuation Procedure:** Please make your way to the temporary waiting space, which is within the escape stair at each level of the building. Ring for assistance from the point situated within the temporary waiting space

Our staff are trained to carry down with the use of an office chair.

A team will meet you in the temporary waiting space. You will need to sit on the chair, which has armrests to help support you. The three staff members will then carry you down.

Equipment to assist the evacuation:

---

Office Chair

## Evacuation Options

- Option 1. Use of a lift
- Option 2. Meet assistance at temporary waiting space
- Option 3. Meet assistance at work location
- Option 4. Make own way down stairs slowly
- Option 5. Shuffle or slide down stairs after main flow of people
- Option 6. Use an evacuation chair or similar
- Option 7. Carry down – 2 persons
- Option 8. Carry down – 3 persons
- Option 9. Carry down – 4 persons
- Option 10. Travel down in own chair with support
- Option 11. Cannot transfer readily from wheelchair
- Option 12. Travel down stairs using handrails
- Option 13. Assistance from 1 person
- Option 14. Assistance from 2 people
- Option 15. Orientation information
- Option 16. Tactile map of the building
- Option 17. Colour coding or contrasting on escape routes
- Option 18. Step edge markings
- Option 19. Needs to be shown the escape routes
- Option 20. Needs assistance for the person and their dog

- Option 21. Needs doors to be opened
- Option 22. Large print information
- Option 23. Identification of escape routes by reception or security staff
- Option 24. Flashing beacons
- Option 25. Buddy system
- Option 26. Vibrating pagers
- Option 27. Alternative communication system
- Option 28. Additional checks by fire wardens
- Option 29. Horizontal evacuation into another fire compartment
- Option 30. Phased evacuation
- Option 31. Taped information

Evacuation Option	Electric Wheelchair user	Wheelchair user	Other Mobility impaired person	Breathing/ other health issues	Visually impaired person	Hearing impaired person	Dyslexic/ Orientation disorders	Learning difficulty /Autism	Mental health problems	Dexterity problems
1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						<input type="radio"/>
2		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				<input type="radio"/>	
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				<input type="radio"/>		
6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						
7	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						
8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						
9	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						
10		<input type="radio"/>								
11	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>								
12	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>		
13	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>		
15					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
16					<input type="radio"/>					
17					<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

	Electric Wheelchair user	Wheelchair user	Other Mobility impaired person	Breathing/ other health issues	Visually impaired person	Hearing impaired person	Dyslexic/ Orientation disorders	Learning difficulty /Autism	Mental health problems	Dexterity problems
18			<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
19					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
20					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
21										<input type="radio"/>
22					<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
23					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
24						<input type="radio"/>				
25						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
26	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>				
27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
28						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
29	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>								
30	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						<input type="radio"/>		
31					<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

## Specimen Letter

Dear

### Personal Emergency Egress Plan

We are currently reviewing and improving our emergency evacuation procedures to ensure that all of our staff are able to leave the building safely in the event of a fire or other emergency. We understand that many disabled people will be able to leave the building unaided; however, some may require assistance. Therefore, we are writing to you to ask you whether you would like us to draw up a Personal Emergency Egress Plan with you in order to assist you to leave the building safely in the event of an emergency.

The plan will explain your options in the event of a fire evacuation and will also state who is designated to assist you. Your line manager will work with you to find the best solution and draw up your plan.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and return by ..... . If you do require a plan we will arrange a meeting with you to discuss it. If it is necessary we will appoint people to help you. You will receive a copy of your plan which will also be given to those people who will assist you.

This does not affect your right to employment. As your employer we have a duty to provide you with a suitable evacuation plan.

If you have a temporary condition, which may impede your evacuation, please inform us if you feel you need assistance. If your disability does not normally affect your work but might be a problem in an evacuation situation, please inform us so that we can arrange suitable assistance.

Yours sincerely



We operate an evacuation system which includes Personal Emergency Egress Plans for disabled people. If you have answered yes to the above question we will arrange a meeting with you.

If you have any questions please speak to\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you

## Reception Sign

**We operate a system of  
assisted evacuation for  
disabled visitors. Please  
tell our receptionist  
your requirements**

## Reference Material

Fire (Scotland) Act 2005: part 3 as amended

Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006

Fire legislation website: [www.infoscotland.com/firelaw](http://www.infoscotland.com/firelaw)

Disability Rights Commission website: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

Health and Safety Executive website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Scottish Building Standards Technical Handbook for Non-Domestic Buildings

British Standards Institution ([www.bsi-global.com](http://www.bsi-global.com))

British Standard 5588 Part 8 1988: Code of practice for means of escape for disabled people (the date quoted is that at the time of publication).