

## Guidance Notes – Hearing Impaired Persons

- (1) No further action required.
- (2) Vibrating Pager to be issued by Student Services. Recipient to be trained in use.
- (3) The assessor should arrange for a copy of the emergency procedures to be provided in an alternative format; e.g. British Sign Language.
- (4) Questions 1.4 & 1.5 must be answered.
- (5) Where a negative response has been given, the assessor should complete form **PEEP 3** and send it to the Director of Student Services as soon as possible. The Assessor will need to check that the works have been completed, preferably before the student takes up residence. Ordinarily, this should take no longer than 1 calendar week.

## Guidance Notes Visually Impaired Persons

- (1) Your estimate should be based on walking the escape routes and identifying an “evacuation time” for each available route. NB. Routes should be realistic – do not consider every possible permutation available if this means taking many complex routes. If a visually-impaired person identifies that they cannot evacuate unaided then PEEP 2 section 3 “mobility impairments” must be completed to determine how the user will reach a place of safety.
- (2) Escape routes should only be interpreted as meaning “direct” means of escape; do not consider routes that require travel beyond an escape staircase or other means of escape. Unless travel distances are relatively short (10 metres) then more than 1 travel route should be available if an area is to be considered suitable for occupation.
- (3) Items to be considered here are things such as signs that project into walkways etc. at a height likely to cause injury to a visually impaired person. Additionally, steps or raised door thresholds may present a trip hazard to the visually impaired.
- (4) Where a negative response has been given, the assessor should complete form **PEEP3** and send it to the Director of Estates and Facilities Management Division as soon as possible. The Assessor will need to check that the works have been completed, preferably before the disabled person starts using the building. In certain circumstances it may not be possible to undertake any adjustments (e.g. due to excessive costs, drawn out planning requirements or structural difficulties with actually undertaking the works.). Alternatively, if the works are complex, it may not be possible to undertake the works in a quick enough time frame to allow the disabled user to use the building. In both instances the assessor will need to identify alternative areas where the service can be provided and then subsequently undertake a PEEP for this area.
- (5) The assessor should ascertain the best means for providing a “written or verbal” account of the emergency procedures; this could be in Braille or large text or tape.
- (6) Where other suggestions are made by the disabled user these should be forwarded to the Divisional Director or Building Manager with overall responsibility for the particular building. This should be communicated using form PEEP3. Suggestions could include items such as Braille signage, tactile floor signs, additional handrails with directional signage etc. Suggestions should be objective; focus should be kept on measures that will give a measurable benefit.

## Guidance Notes – Mobility Impaired Persons PEEP Checklist

- (1) Could a device or other form of technological assistance be provided to aid the user's evacuation?
- (2) Where the user is able to walk for short distances, could they actually walk unaided out of the building? It is important to consider whether the disabled user could be put at risk (e.g. by being "knocked over") in an evacuation by other people or whether the disabled users progress could delay the general evacuation of the building and thus put other users at risk. In these circumstances attempting to evacuate the building unaided may not be considered viable. Alternatively, disabled users falling into this category might need to wait at a refuge and evacuate last.
- (3) It is important to establish what type of wheelchair any particular disabled user might use. Different models have varying dimensions which may impact on whether the user can manoeuvre safely around a building. Additionally, if the user has an "oversize" chair, it is possible that this may present a hazard to other evacuees e.g. by restricting passage along corridors or down staircases (where refuges are positioned at the top of staircases.)
- (4) Users of other mobility aids may have similar problems to those persons using wheelchairs; users of crutches, sticks, walking frames etc. are likely to make slower progress when evacuating buildings. Traversing flights of stairs is likely to be particularly hazardous and should be discouraged.
- (5) Ideally, mobility impaired building users, in common with all other persons, should have more than 1 possible means of escape available to them in an emergency. Means of escape travel distances are measured from the users starting point to their final destination (i.e. outside of the building or a temporary place of safety.) Where 2 or more escape routes are provided, travel distance should not exceed more than 25 metres. When determining how many means of escape are available, the assessor should only consider direct routes – i.e. the first means of escape that the building user will encounter when travelling in any direction around a building. The assessor should also consider whether the building configuration changes if, say, the intention is to use the building outside of normal working hours; in many University buildings certain areas are locked off to prevent unauthorised access out of hours – this could impact on the numbers of exits that will be available, or how those exits are used (e.g. the need for security codes to bypass keypads etc.).
- (6) Where activities are limited to the ground floor (or, in the case of split level buildings, any floor where escape can lead directly to the outside) it may be acceptable to have only 1 means of escape. This is commonly termed dead-end travel. Where such a situation exists then travel should not normally exceed 10 metres from starting point to final exit. The risks associated with "dead-end" travel can, to a certain extent be mitigated by providing a greater degree of fire detection; however it needs to be noted that not all University fire alarm systems can be easily upgraded. Where users will be situated in an area that presents a single means of escape, the assessor must contact the Health, Safety and Environment office for further advice as to what risk controls must be provided.
- (7) When assessing the approximate escape time it will be necessary to actually travel along each available escape route to time how long it actually takes to reach the final exit. This time is likely to be increased in an emergency due to the presence of other evacuees; when

estimating the impact that other evacuees will have on the mobility impaired user's progress the assessor should try to assess how many other building users are likely to be using the escape route at the same time (e.g. are there offices that decant on to the escape route, or will larger groups potentially be evacuating from adjacent seminar rooms, laboratories or lecture theatres?) The user being assessed should be asked how they feel that the presence of other people will affect their progress when escaping – there may indeed be some positive effects such as fire doors being opened by others thus aiding escape.

(8) When walking the various escape routes the assessor and disabled user should try to identify any inherent building features which may hinder the disabled user's evacuation. Issues here could include raised thresholds, steep ramps, short flights of stairs, heavy fire doors, etc. A judgement needs to be made between the assessor and the assessed to determine whether the hazards presented by such features are significant enough to preclude the use of any given escape route. Where the risks are adjudged to be significant then it may be necessary to classify the area unsuitable for use by the assessed. In this instance alternative arrangements will need to be identified either on a temporary or permanent basis dependent on whether "reasonable adjustments" can be made. The decision as to reasonableness will need to be decided by the unit with overall responsibility for the building; the assessor should advise the relevant unit using form PEEP2.

(9) Where other suggestions are made by the disabled user these should be forwarded to the Divisional Director or Building Manager with overall responsibility for the particular building. This should be communicated using form PEEP3. Suggestions should be objective; focus should be kept on measures that will give a measurable benefit.

(10) Wherever possible the first principle for accommodating mobility impaired persons should be to investigate whether alternative ground floor based facilities are available to provide the desired residential accommodation or service or work location.

(11) Horizontal escape routes should be identified within the relevant Building Assessment which should be referred to prior to undertaking the PEEP. When considering whether a horizontal escape route is available for use then the general principles of escape must be observed: this must not be the only proposed means of escape unless travel distance does not exceed 8 metres; where more than 1 escape route is available, the horizontal route must be no more than 30 metres from the disabled users starting point. Care must also be taken to ensure that the use of the horizontal escape route will not require the disabled person to travel against the flow of other people using corridors – this will impede progress of both the disabled person and other building users. Ideally, then, where this strategy is to be used, the disabled user's activities should be scheduled to take place as close to the horizontal escape route as possible.

(12) Where horizontal escape or refuge provision is suggested as an evacuation strategy then those safety provisions must be clearly sign posted from the user's point of origin i.e. as soon as they enter the corridor. Signage should include the "wheelchair user" pictogram to clearly indicate safe escape routes for mobility impaired users. The assessed person should be asked to comment on the adequacy of the signage in terms of both clarity and positioning. Where deficiencies are identified these should be highlighted via form PEEP3 to the division in overall control of the building. Changes to signage provision should take no longer than 1 week to correct. The assessor will be responsible for monitoring that these works have been satisfactorily undertaken and amending the PEEP as necessary.

(13) From the outset, it is important to note that refuges are only to be considered as **temporary** places of safety. Refuges should be identified within the relevant Building Assessment which should be referred to prior to undertaking the PEEP. Refuges need to be sited on, or as close as possible to, escape staircase. Refuges also need to be of an adequate construction to prevent the spread of fire and smoke. If rooms are to be nominated as refuges then these must be kept free of combustible materials; refuges must not double up as stores! When considering whether a refuge is available for use then the general principles of escape must be observed: a single refuge must not be the only proposed means of securing safety unless the total travel distance does not exceed 8 metres; where more than 1 escape route is available, the refuge(s) must be no more than 30 metres from the disabled users starting point. Where there are no alternative means of escape, e.g. to another building by means of horizontal escape, it will probably be necessary to provide more than 1 refuge for mobility impaired users requiring access to areas above the ground floor. Ideally, where this strategy is to be used, the mobility impaired user's activities should be scheduled to take place as close to the refuge as possible. There are other pitfalls that need to be avoided when considering providing refuges as a means of securing safety; refuges limit the number of mobility impaired user's that can actually be accommodated within any given building – if a building has 3 possible escape routes and a single person refuge is provided on each floor at each escape, then it has to be considered that only 2 escape routes would be available in the event of a fire. Consequently, only 2 potential refuge users could, in this scenario, be present on each floor at any given time. This means that when preparing the PEEP, consideration needs to be given to how many other potential refuge users are likely to be in the building at the same time.

(14) Management have a responsibility under the Fire Prevention Act 1971 to make sure that all persons for whom they are responsible are able to reach a “place of safety”, without assistance from the fire brigade, in the event of a fire. “Place of safety” is interpreted as meaning outside of the building. In normal working hours the University Emergency Response Team are able to provide limited assistance to help refuge users reach a place of safety. This resource is finite; there are currently only 5 Breathing Apparatus trained members of the team and their services are only available in normal working hours. Outside of these hours refuges are unlikely, therefore, to be considered a viable option as a means of providing a temporary place of safety. This in turn means that any building where refuges are provided as part of the fire escape strategy will not be deemed as “accessible” outside of normal working hours. In this instance, the assessor will need to identify alternative arrangements for providing the intended service provision.

(15) To comply with the British Standard, BS5839 part 9: 2003, refuges must be equipped with a means of communication. One of the main requirements is that this system be linked to an “operator service” at all times that the building will be in use; effectively this needs to be a “24 hour” service. In University terms a “24 hour” service is provided by the security lodge at York House. When undertaking the PEEP the assessed person should actually try out the communication link to confirm that they understand how the system works and are actually able to operate the communication equipment. Should any difficulty be encountered with the system operation then the assessor must advise the person responsible for providing the system by completing form PEEP3. The assessor is responsible for monitoring progress to ensure that the relevant adjustments have been made to the communication point.

(16) Because refuges are only a temporary safety provision, some form of management arrangements are required to ensure that, if necessary, the refuge user is able to be removed to a place of “permanent” safety. This is most likely to be achieved by the use of a “proprietary evacuation chair”. Not all mobility impaired persons are able to make use of such chairs; some impairments could actually be worsened by using the chair (e.g. because the chairs do not provide correct support). The assessed person will need to confirm whether they, to their knowledge, are able to be transported in such chairs. Where this is identified as an option, training will need to be given to both the potential user and any persons tasked with transporting the chair.

(17) The assessor should identify the location of the nearest evacuation chair provided to effect escape from the refuge. If no chair is provided the assessor must advise the person responsible for providing the system by completing form PEEP3. The assessor is responsible for monitoring the situation to ensure the relevant adjustments have been made to the communication point.