

ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This document outlines the procedure and processes for assisting students with disabilities when evacuating the residence halls during an emergency. Evacuation may include leaving the building and moving to an outside rally point during a fire or moving to the indoor shelter location during a tornado.

Elevators should never be used by anyone during a fire or tornado emergency. Stairway evacuation of individuals with mobility issues is challenging and can present a hazard to the individual and to rescuers. For the safety of all involved, stairway evacuation should only be completed by trained emergency personnel.

Remember that the person with the disability is the best authority on how to be moved.

Notification of Emergency

BGSU's official communication about emergencies comes through the AlertBG system. All students and staff are automatically signed up for the notices. This system provides timely text message and e-mail alerts regarding active and imminent on campus emergency situations. The AlertBG system is tested campus wide once per semester. Additional notification will also come through AlertBG, BGSU Website, BGSU Facebook, BGSU Twitter and Digital Signage located across campus.

Tornado Warnings will also be announced over the residence hall PA system and the county Tornado Sirens (Audio Alert System) will sound. The Tornado Sirens (Audio Alert System) are tested in Bowling Green on the 1st Saturday of every month.

Fire emergencies will also be sounded in each hall by the automated fire detection system. Fire drills are conducted twice per semester and include the sounding of the alarm system.

If a student needs additional emergency alert accommodations (Bed Shakers, Strobe Lights, Door Bells, Etc.) this should first be discussed with and approved by the Office of Accessibility Services. Once approved by the Office of Accessibility Services, the appropriate accommodations will be made by the Office of Residence Life. This approval and accommodation process typically happens as part of the housing assignment process. Additional alert information should be provided in the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, to any assistants noted in the plan and to hall staff.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan^{1&5}

Individuals with disabilities are advised to create a personal emergency evacuation plan. The Office of Accessibility Services can provide Emergency Evacuation Planning checklist to those students who request it. The Office of Accessibility Services will work with the student to create a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. The Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan will then be shared with emergency services and placed at the Residence Hall front desk in the emergency response binder and located in the fire panel, to be referred to in case of an actual emergency. The template includes the following information;

1. Demographic & contact information
2. Physical address
3. Notification methods
4. Checklist of needs, way-finding, type of assistance needs
5. Information on the individuals' service animals
6. Assistant information

Emergency Locations⁴

1. **Outside Rally Point** – Each residence hall has a designated outside rally point, located in the building Comprehensive Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This location will be used for emergencies that require all residents to exit the hall. Hall staff members will be present at these locations to provide instructions and to conduct a roster check to assure that everyone has safely exited the building and is accounted for.
2. **Shelter in Place** - Sheltering-In-Place will be ordered when the act of leaving the building poses a higher risk to the health and safety of the building occupants. A Shelter-In-Place may be ordered in response to hazardous materials incidents, transportation accidents or severe weather events. A Shelter-In-Place may

require the building occupants to move to a lower or higher level if available, or to stay in their current location.

3. **Tornado Sheltering Location** – During a Tornado Warning students should move to the lowest floor possible. They should move to an inside room or hallway without windows and glass. All doors should be closed as an additional precaution.

Evacuation Options²

1. **Horizontal Evacuation** – if possible, the individual will utilize the building exits on the ground level to move to a safe location outside of the building. During a fire, this would involve moving to the designated outside rally point.
2. **Stairway Evacuation** – this involves using the stairways to move to the ground level and exit the building. Once an individual has exited the building they should move to the designated outside rally point.
3. **Shelter in Place** – individuals who are unable to exit should shelter in place, unless an imminent danger is present. When sheltering in place, make sure that the room has a window, telephone, and solid door. Individuals who are sheltering in place should call 911 or University Police at 419-372-2346. University Police will relay this information to first responders who will determine the best course of action for rescue & evacuation of the individual.

Guidelines for Assisting Individuals with Disabilities

1. **Mobility Impairments** - Since elevators should not be used for evacuation during a fire alarm, persons with mobility impairments may need assistance in evacuating unless they are on a ground floor with accessible exits. As persons with mobility impairments have varying degrees of limitations, information is offered for two possible scenarios: ambulatory and non-ambulatory impairments.
 - a. **Ambulatory Mobility Impairments** - Persons with mobility impairments who are able to walk independently, either with or without the use of crutches or a cane, may be able to negotiate stairs with minor assistance in an emergency situation. Even some persons who customarily use a wheelchair or scooter for long distance travel may be able to walk independently in an emergency situation. If individuals are able to walk up or down stairs, it is advisable that they wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting to evacuate
 - b. **Non-Ambulatory Mobility Impairments** - In keeping with current philosophy and preference to "shelter in place," wheelchair users should exit the building on their own if they can do so. If they encounter stairs or otherwise cannot exit the building on their own, shelter in place, call 911, and wait until emergency rescue personnel arrive. If rescue is deemed necessary, qualified personnel (Police, Fire Fighters, EMS) will assist in the evacuation.
2. **Visual Impairments** - Most persons with visual impairments will be familiar with their immediate surroundings. In the event of an emergency, tell the person with a visual impairment the nature of the emergency and offer to guide the person to the nearest emergency exit. Have the person take your elbow and escort them out of the building. As you walk, tell the person where you are and advise them of any obstacles. When you reach safety, orient the person to where they are and ask if any further assistance is needed.
3. **Hearing Impairments** - Buildings on campus are equipped with visual alarms. Some persons with hearing impairments may not perceive audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted to the situation by gestures or by turning the light switch off and on. Emergency instructions can be given by verbalizing, mouthing, or by a short, explicit note. Example: "Fire alarm -- go out south doors—now!" It is appropriate to offer assistance to a hearing impaired person as you leave the building.

NOTE: The person with the disability is the best authority on how to assist with their evacuation.

NOTE: This procedure has been benchmarked and includes data from or modified from other resources including the following and is noted above;

1 - http://safety.uchicago.edu/pp/emergency/evac_procedures.shtml

2 - <http://www.loyola.edu/departments/emergencypreparedness/persons%20with%20disabilities>

3- BGSU Residence Life CEAP

4- <http://www.nfpa.org/~media/Files/forms%20and%20premiums/chkfst.doc>