

Guidelines for Assisting People with Disabilities During Main Library Emergency Evacuations

(10/05)

Keep in mind the needs of library users and co-workers with disabilities as you clear and leave your worksites during emergency evacuations. Be prepared to provide assistance and clear instructions about how to exit the building.

If it appears that an individual cannot leave the building independently, please offer assistance. People with disabilities generally can direct you in assisting them. Your efforts might help save their lives.

Helping someone who is **blind**:

- Announce your presence.
- Offer your elbow so the person can follow you out. If leading several individuals at the same time, ask them to hold each other's hands.
- After exiting the building, orient them to where they are and describe what is happening around them.

Helping someone who has **limited mobility**:

- People using **crutches and canes** may need accompaniment down the stairs (staff or a volunteer patron) to help keep others from knocking them down.
- Direct or escort **wheelchair users** to the nearest stairwells. Wheelchair users should not be separated from their chairs.
- Help maneuver people and their wheelchairs to safe spots in the stairwells (marked with the wheelchair symbol). Ensure that they don't block other's travel up or down stairs.
- Plug the red telephone handset into the jack. This alerts the Fire Command Center that help is needed. If asked, report your floor, stair number and the number of people waiting for assistance. (Your call is received at the FCC even if nobody 'answers.')
- Leave the red handset plugged in.
- If possible, stay with the person you are assisting until a firefighter relieves you. Tell a colleague to report your location to the supervisor in charge of check-in at the Area of Refuge.
- If nobody can stay with the disabled parties, remind them the stairwells are safe from smoke and fire for at least two hours. Provide assurance that firefighters will come as soon as possible to help them leave the building.
- Fully close stairwell doors after each use to keep the stairwells free of smoke and fire.

Identifying and helping someone who has an **"invisible" disability**:

- A person who is slow to respond or confused may need you to slow down and provide simple, clear instructions. Gestures may be helpful. Walk with him or her if he or she seems unable to follow the emergency evacuation signs independently.
- If an individual appears to be unaware that alarms are sounding & flashing, tap the table or his or her shoulder. Point to the visible alarm and the nearest "EXIT" sign. Gesture to leave.
- Do not attempt to reason with an individual who is exhibiting panic, extreme confusion or severe anxiety and is refusing to leave the building. Continue evacuating patrons and notify Security if individuals refuse to comply with emergency instructions.

Service Animals

Service animals should leave the library with their owners. Owners should keep the animals securely leashed or harnessed. Do not attempt to control or restrain a service animal. Notify Security if the owner is unable to control his or her service animal.