

Evacuation of Disabled Persons Procedures

A. Non-Ambulatory Persons:

Evacuation may not be necessary or advisable. Many stairwells are designed to provide temporary protection from fire or other danger. An able-bodied volunteer should stay with a wheelchair user in the platform area of the stairwell while a second person notifies emergency personnel or paramedics of the exact location of the wheelchair user.

If immediate evacuation is necessary, be aware of the following considerations:

- Wheelchairs have many moving parts; some are not designed to withstand stress or lifting.
- You may need to remove the chair batteries. Life support equipment may be attached.
- In a life-threatening emergency it may be necessary to remove an individual from their wheelchair. Lifting a person with minimal ability to move may be dangerous.
- Wheelchairs should not be used to descend stairwells, if at all possible.
- Non-ambulatory persons may have respiratory complications. Remove them from smoke or fumes immediately and determine their needs and preferences.

Always consult with the person in the chair regarding how best to assist them.

- The number of people necessary for assistance.
- Ways of being removed from the wheelchair.
- Whether to extend or move extremities when lifting because of pain, catheter leg bags, spasticity, braces, etc.
- Whether to carry forward or backward on a flight of stairs.
- Whether a seat cushion or pad should be brought along if the wheelchair is being left behind.
- In lieu of a wheelchair, does the person prefer a stretcher, chair with cushion/pad, or car seat?
- Is paramedic assistance necessary?

B. Visually Impaired Persons:

Most visually impaired persons will be familiar with their immediate work area. In an emergency situation:

- Describe the nature of the emergency and offer to act as a "sighted guide" — offer your elbow and escort him/her to a safe place.
- As you walk, describe where you are and advise of any obstacles.
- When you have reached safety, orient the person to where you are and ask if further assistance is needed.

C. Hearing Impaired Persons:

Because persons with impaired hearing may not perceive emergency alarms, an alternative warning technique is required. Two methods of warning:

- Write a note describing the emergency and the nearest evacuation route. ("Fire. Go out rear door to the right and down, NOW!")
- Turn the light switch off and on to gain attention, then indicate through gestures what is happening and what to do.