The University of Edinburgh

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Western General Hospital Site

Royal Edinburgh Hospital Site

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mobility Impairment and Building Emergencies
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Aim
Safe and prompt evacuation of people with mobility, hearing or visual impairments, or with other special needs, from UoE buildings and local areas on the WGH/REH sites during a building emergency.
Introduction
Mobility impairment may be temporary or permanent, ranging from someone with a sprained ankle using a temporary walking aid to a regular wheelchair user. In either case, a person with a mobility impairment could have a problem leaving the building rapidly in the event of an emergency and may, therefore, require assistance, and for specific prior arrangements to be made accordingly.

In the event of any building/area emergency, perhaps particularly one involving fire, it is almost inevitable that a sense of apprehension will exist. For a person with mobility impairment, their anxiety could well be increased by a fear that they might not be able to evacuate sufficiently promptly.

There are slightly different arrangements for people with mobility impairments in the UoE Buildings and local areas at the WGH/REH. The following paragraphs describe those arrangements and should be read carefully by people with mobility impairments working within or visiting any one or more of the areas as appropriate.

Separate arrangements apply for the NHS parts of the WGH/REH sites. University staff with mobility impairments working in NHS space should familiarise themselves with arrangements for whatever area they may be working in as a matter of the highest priority before commencing work.

By the same token, University staff with mobility impairments may be required from time to time, or even on one occasion only, to visit another place of work. In all such cases, they should familiarise themselves with arrangements for whatever building they may be working in as a matter of the highest priority before commencing work; do not depend on an adequate briefing being provided at another place of work.

The requirements of people with hearing or visual impairments, women in late pregnancy, and others with special needs, are also addressed in this Section; however, unless complicated with mobility impairments too, it would generally be expected that most could evacuate the building quickly, perhaps with some assistance from other occupants.

Policy
The underpinning policy for emergency evacuation of people with mobility impairments is that:

- Specific procedures must exist to ensure that people with mobility impairments can be safely and promptly evacuated
- Each person with a mobility impairment must, themselves, know what procedures are in place for their evacuation, and have personally contributed to the formulation of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan specifically tailored to meet their particular needs
- People with mobility impairments intending to work outside hours of expected building occupancy, or alone in either building, must conform to policies set out in Out of Hours Work.

Informing People with Mobility Impairments of the Evacuation Procedures
Responsibility for informing mobility-impaired laboratory-based staff and students, and visitors to the laboratories who have mobility impairments, of fire evacuation procedures, rests with principal
investigators and senior managers representing the building or local area where a person with the mobility impairment will be based or visit.

The application, registration and matriculation/enrolment process for new students will often inform the process whereby the requirements of a person with mobility impairment is appropriately addressed in anticipation of their arrival.

However, not all prospective students inform the University in advance of matriculation that they have mobility impairment or other special needs. For example, someone who cannot walk long distances because they have arthritis may never contact the University’s Disability Office, and yet it may be advisable for them to have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP); see below.

Principal investigators and senior managers must, therefore, have a procedure for informing their staff, students and visitors what arrangements exist for setting up a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. The University’s Disability Office is prepared to be involved where a student agrees that they should be informed, but it should be noted that the Disability Office deals only with students and not with staff who may be mobility-impaired.

Where it is apparent that a visitor reporting to Reception in either building has a disability that might impair their ability to perceive or react appropriately to a building emergency, the Receptionist should advise the visitor of the following arrangements in outline and brief the visitor’s host of the need for him or her to make detailed arrangements for the safety of the visitor, perhaps extending to preparation of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

**Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)**

The principal investigator or senior manager representing the laboratory or local area where the person with a mobility impairment will be based or visit will, together with the H&S Manager for the WGH/REH sites and each person with mobility impairment, formulate a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for the person with special needs, tailored to that person’s specific requirements. Others who should usually be involved are the University’s Fire Safety Unit and the University of Edinburgh’s Estates & Buildings Department if physical modifications are required to the working environment. The Disability Office is prepared to be involved where a student agrees that they should be informed.

A typical Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan will address:

- Specific vulnerabilities of the person for whom the Plan is to be created
- Location(s) within the building(s) where the person will normally work or visit
- The suitability of the building to support the person under normal circumstances and in the event of an emergency
- Means to ensure that the named person can be alerted effectively to a building emergency
- Actions to be taken by the named person, and all others with roles in support of the named person, in the event of a building emergency
- Means for the named person to communicate with building’s emergency controllers throughout the emergency
- Any other measures necessary to provide support to the named person during broadcast of an alarm and actual evacuation
• Any special requirements with regard to evacuation assembly and reoccupation of the building after resolution of the emergency
• The names and routine and emergency contact details of all people with roles in support of the named person
• A description of resources allocated, and physical adaptations made to the working environment, which have been dictated by the Plan
• Special arrangements for lone or out-of-hours working if sanctioned
• Any other relevant factors identified during discussions dictating special arrangements
• An agreed review date and frequency of reviews
• Signatures of all parties involved

The Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be discussed again, at the draft stage, with the individual concerned to ensure that he or she is entirely comfortable with, and fully confident in the arrangements which relate to him or her as an individual. A finalised Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, and any associated physical arrangements, will also be confirmed with the UoE Fire Safety Unit and relevant buildings managers.

A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) may be required to evolve to meet the changing needs of the individual and should, therefore, be reviewed on an appropriately regular basis, but certainly not less than annually.

Out-of-Hours and Lone-Working Arrangements
People with mobility impairments are as entitled as anyone else to work outside of normal working hours, or alone in any area of either building, provided that they conform to the same requirements as for any other person and that this matter has been addressed specifically in their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

WESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Implementation
In practice, the policy for the University buildings and local areas at the WGH/REH sites is achieved by:

Western General Hospital

• Provision of phased fire alarm systems linked to building compartmentation
• Provision of temporary waiting areas (Refuges), together with a special monitoring and evacuation procedure
• Special training for Fire Co-ordinators, and Fire Stewards

Fire Alarm and Building Compartmentation
An activated fire alarm will result in a continuous sound in the building. For staff and students in embedded hospital space please refer to the local NHS Emergency Evacuation procedures. All people
with mobility impairments should proceed promptly to evacuate the area whenever an alarm sounds, irrespective of whether it is a continuous or intermittent alarm.

**Action to be Taken by a Person with a Mobility Impairment**

In the event of an emergency signalled by alarm sounders located throughout the building, a person with a mobility impairment should evacuate immediately, without delaying to collect personal possessions, and proceed to the relevant Evacuation Assembly Point or, if that is not possible, proceed to one of the temporary waiting areas (Refuges) described in their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) and await the arrival of an assigned Fire Steward. No attempt should be made to re-enter the building until clear instructions that it is safe to do so have been issued by attending fire-fighters.

**The Role of Fire Stewards during an Emergency Evacuation - Procedure for Supporting People with Mobility Impairments**

The procedures in place set out specific responsibilities for appropriately trained and personally assigned Fire Stewards.

Normally, in the event of an evacuation, a Fire Steward (sometimes known as a Fire Warden) is expected to clear his or her designated area and report to a Fire Co-ordinator. Where necessary, and the arrangement has been set out in a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan for a person with mobility impairment, a specific Fire Steward, or more than one person, will be named who will be expected to make that person his or her only priority in the event of a buildings emergency. The Fire Steward(s) will meet the named person at the Evacuation Assembly Point as specified in the named person’s Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan in the event that an alarm sounds.

If a person with mobility impairment is expected to work within one of the University buildings or local areas on the WGH/REH sites for a significant period of time, it is expected that their supervisor or host will know within which area(s) they will normally be based. A Fire Steward from the local area should be informed by the person’s supervisor or host and asked to make him or herself known to the person with mobility impairment at the earliest reasonable opportunity, and discuss their specific requirements in detail. A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) should previously have been formulated. The Plan may have to evolve to meet the changing needs of the individual and should, therefore, be reviewed on a regular basis.

Even in the absence of previously notified need (identification of people with mobility impairment within the building), Fire Stewards should sweep through areas that lie alongside their own evacuation route from the building to ensure that no-one has been forced, perhaps as a result of very recent injury, to shelter in a temporary waiting area (Refuge) pending assistance.

**Signage**

Fire Action Notices are provided throughout UoE buildings and instruct people with mobility impairments on evacuation procedures for the building.
Implementation
In practice, the policy for the UoE building on the Royal Edinburgh Hospital site is achieved for the Kennedy Tower by:

- Provision of continuous fire alarm system linked to the NHS system.
- Provision of temporary waiting areas (Refuges) based in the NHS linked corridor
- Special training for Fire Co-ordinators and Fire Stewards

Activation of an automatic fire/smoke detector will result in a continuous sounding alarm in the Kennedy Tower

In the event of a fire affecting any area of the Kennedy Tower the lift will not be accessible.

Action to be taken by a Person with a Mobility Impairment
In the event of an emergency signalled by alarm sounders, a person with mobility impairment should proceed to an area determined in their PEEP.

A person with mobility impairment who has successfully self-evacuated from the building should report that fact to the Fire Coordinator (see Fire Safety Procedures) who will be present at the fire alarm control panel close to Reception; alternatively, they may ask someone else to report that fact on their behalf.

Temporary Waiting Areas (Refuges)
At any one of these locations, the presence and safety of people with mobility impairments will be monitored by the Fire Co-ordinator. People with mobility impairments will be evacuated from temporary waiting areas (Refuges) by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Signs direct people with mobility impairments, who are unable to evacuate the building, to assemble in these areas.

The Role of Fire Stewards during an Emergency Evacuation

Procedure for Supporting People with Mobility Impairments
The procedures in place sets out specific responsibilities for trained and appropriately assigned Fire Stewards.

Normally, in the event of an evacuation, a Fire Steward (sometimes known as a Fire Warden) is expected to clear his or her designated area and report to a Fire Co-ordinator. Where necessary, and the arrangement has been set out in a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for a person with mobility impairment, a specific Fire Steward will be named who will be expected to make that person his or her only priority in the event of a buildings emergency. The Fire Steward will meet the named person either at the Evacuation Assembly Point or a pre-arranged temporary waiting area (Refuge) as specified in the named person’s Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in the event that an alarm sounds.

If a person with mobility impairment is expected to work within one of the University buildings or local areas on the REH site for a significant period of time, it is expected that their supervisor or host
will know within which area(s) they will normally be based. A Fire Steward from the host area should be informed by the person’s supervisor or host and asked to make him or herself known to the person with mobility impairment at the earliest reasonable opportunity, and discuss their specific requirements in detail. A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) should previously have been formulated. This Plan may need to evolve to meet the changing needs of the individual and should, therefore, be reviewed on a regular basis.

Even in the absence of previously notified need (identification of people with mobility impairment within the building), Fire Stewards should sweep through areas that lie on their own evacuation route from the building to ensure that no-one has been forced, perhaps as a result of very recent injury, to shelter in a temporary waiting area (Refuge) pending assistance.

**Lifts**

Lifts are provided in various parts of University buildings and local areas most of which are designated as passenger lifts. These will not be available in case of an emergency situation.

**People with a Hearing Impairment**

Although it is hoped that co-workers will draw the sounding of a buildings emergency alarm to the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, people with profound or frequency-specific hearing impairments could also be made aware of a building emergency by use of a radio-pager with a vibrating alert facility; options will be discussed with each such person during creation of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) tailored to their specific requirements. A person with impaired hearing will normally be able to evacuate the building without particular difficulty if assisted on a “buddy system” basis by a willing co-worker who is able to discern the alarm tone and avoid the person with hearing impairment entering an area where an alarm is sounding continuously. There is unlikely to be a need for a specially trained person to assist a person with a hearing impairment.

**People with a Visual Impairment**

In most circumstances, people with a visual impairment will be alerted to a fire in the same way as those who are not visually impaired, although there are some areas of the two buildings where, because of problematic penetration by audible alarms, use has been made of flashing beacons. The specific requirements of a person with visual impairment will be discussed with them during creation of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) tailored to their special needs. A person with a visual impairment will normally be able to evacuate the building without particular difficulty if assisted by a fully-sighted co-worker, on a “buddy system” basis, with the prior agreement of the co-worker, without the need to call upon a specially trained person.

**Women in Late Pregnancy**

A woman in the late stages of pregnancy might require assistance to vacate the building in an emergency, but this is perhaps best managed on a “buddy system” basis with the prior agreement of a willing co-worker, without the need to call upon a specially trained person. All relevant safety implications should be considered in formulating a New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment (MA1):

Further Information

General information on procedures for the evacuation of people with mobility impairments appears on the University’s Health and Safety web site:

http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/Safety/Policy/Part2.pdf  (Paragraph 2.6)

Last reviewed/updated: January 2015