

Niagara University's policies and procedures require that all persons in a campus facility evacuate that facility any time the fire-alarm system is activated and/or upon notification by the Office of Campus Safety or the emergency coordinator. These policies and procedures apply to both real emergencies and fire drills and must be followed by all members of the university community, including individuals with disabilities. NOTE: Building evacuation notices are posted in the main entrance of every building.

Special considerations may need to be made in emergency situations for individuals, including employees, students, and guests on campus with disabilities. How an individual with a disability responds to an emergency depends on the type of emergency, the specific disability, and the individual's location on campus.

It is wise for individuals to plan for emergencies to the extent that they are able to do so especially if they are students and employees at the university. Preplanning includes developing an evacuation plan and then discussing the specifics of such a plan as needed with members of the university community, including, but not limited to, supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, resident hall staff, and/or other residents. Employees and students should refer to the information below regarding pre-emergency evacuation.

Pre-Emergency Preparation: Students and Employees with Disabilities

In an emergency situation, it is critical to the health and safety of individuals with disabilities that they are familiar with their needs during an evacuation. Both employees and students are expected to convey these needs to their supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents, within the first week of each semester, or as soon as the needs arise. The guidelines listed below are offered as general suggestions and not as an official plan of action. The safety of individuals with disabilities depends on their judgment and knowledge of general safety precautions.

- Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the layout of buildings and the location of exits in every building in which they work, have class, or live in on campus.
- Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the distinct emergency alarm system in each building (e.g., horn, strobe lights). Contact Office of Facilities Services at 716.286.8430 for assistance or additional information.
- Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the safest evacuation sites in each building (see suggestions below).
- Whenever possible, individuals with disabilities should try to have designated persons or "evacuation assistants," such as supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents, assist them during the evacuation.

Evacuation assistants can assist individuals with disabilities in evacuating the building or, as needed, help them reach and access a safe evacuation site (see suggestions below) before alerting emergency personnel of their location in the building and the nature of their disability.

- Individuals with disabilities should tell their evacuation assistants about specific evacuation needs (e.g., use of a wheelchair or respirator, breathing or stamina difficulties).
- Individuals with disabilities should practice instructions beforehand.
- Resident students with either permanent or temporary disabilities should have made their location and needs known to the resident director (RD) and/or lead community advisor (LCA) assigned to their building, as well as the community advisor (CA) assigned to their floor. Because RDs, LCAs and CAs may not be always in the building, it is also recommended that, as needed, students make their needs known to one or more students residing on the same floor in their residence hall. Identifying needs to more than one individual will help to facilitate evacuation in the event of an emergency. In the event that none of these people are available during an evacuation, contact the Office of Campus Safety at Ext. 8111 (716.286.8111) or contact another resident student for assistance. RDs, LCAs, CAs and other students can provide assistance by helping the individual reach the safest evacuation site and by then advising emergency personnel where the individual is located in the building and the nature of the disability.
- Resident students with disabilities should also notify the residence hall staff any time they move to another room in the building or move out of the building.
- It is recommended that a floor meeting be conducted by resident assistants during the early part of each semester to discuss disability concerns and to instruct everyone on emergency procedures. In addition, resident staff training will include notification of the location of individuals with disabilities in each building, and procedures for assisting students.

Evacuation Procedures for Individuals with Disabilities During an Emergency/Drill

- Individuals who are able to negotiate stairs with or without minor assistance should do so when evacuation is required. If danger is imminent, we recommend that individuals with disabilities wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. However, should individuals with disabilities decide to proceed on their own, caution should be used in negotiating the stairwells.

- Individuals who are not able to negotiate stairs should access a safe evacuation site (see suggestions below) enlisting assistance from others if needed. Anyone providing assistance should note the location of the area they are in (e. g., northwest corner, 5th floor) to facilitate evacuation and then alert emergency personnel of the individual's location and the nature of the disability.

Horizontal Evacuation

Move away from the area of imminent danger to a safe distance (e.g., to another wing, the opposite end of the corridor, or the outside if on the ground level).

Vertical (Stairway) Evacuation

Stairways can be used by those who are able to evacuate with or without assistance. A stairway must be large enough for a person using a wheelchair to sit without obstructing the flow of traffic as people exit the building via the stairway. Obstructing the flow of traffic could place the individual with a disability and others in danger.

Shelter-In-Place

Unless danger is imminent, remain in a room with an exterior window and a telephone, closing the door if possible. As needed, individuals can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

If possible, individuals with disabilities should also contact the Office of Campus Safety at 716.286.8111 during an emergency to provide them their name, location and reason for calling. It is also important to indicate specific evacuation needs (e.g., use of a wheelchair or respirator, breathing or stamina difficulties) that should be considered for evacuation. Campus Safety will notify emergency personnel of the individual's location. Phone lines normally remain in service during most building emergencies. If the phone lines fail, individuals can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

Emergency personnel will then enter the building to evacuate individuals who require assistance.

Information on Various Disabilities for Evacuation Assistants

Below is background information on various types of disabilities that supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents should become familiar with if asked to be an evacuation assistant for individuals with disabilities.

If individuals have a mobility impairment and/or use a wheelchair, they will most likely require some type of assistance for evacuation. Elevators should not be used unless directed by emergency personnel. In most instances, it is not wise to attempt to carry the person in the wheelchair because most wheelchairs are not constructed for lifting and can be quite heavy (e.g., power wheelchairs can weigh in excess of 300 pounds). Evacuation of a person who uses a wheelchair is best left to emergency personnel with extensive training in evacuation procedures and the proper equipment.

Individuals with visual impairments should already be familiar with their surroundings after mobility and orientation training. However, if they are not aware of emergency exits, offer assistance to guide them to the nearest emergency exit. Provide assistance by using the sighted-guide technique of offering an elbow. While walking, alert individuals as to where they are and inform them of any obstacles, debris, doorways or narrow passages. Once to safety, orient individuals to their surroundings and determine if further assistance is needed.

Individuals with hearing impairments may need to be alerted to emergency situations. Two options to obtain their attention are: write a note to alert them of the emergency and instruct them where to go, or turn the light switch on and off to gain their attention.