

# Individuals with Disabilities

The College has implemented procedures to assist individuals with disabilities during an emergency. Likewise, individuals with disabilities should create a personal emergency plan which addresses their specific needs before and during an emergency.

## Development of a Personal Emergency Plan

### Step 1: Register

Students with disabilities who need assistance should register with a campus office of Disability Support Services (DSS) regarding the nature of assistance they will specifically need during an emergency. Employees requiring assistance should register with the Office of Human Resources.

### Step 2: Develop Personal Evacuation Instructions

Assistance required during an evacuation should be written down on a card and carried by the individual with disabilities at all times. The card should instruct others on the best ways to assist and the number of persons needed to assist.

### Step 3: Establish Evacuation Assistants

Students and employees with disabilities should prepare for emergencies in advance by establishing a primary and an alternate evacuation assistant for each class or office location. An evacuation assistant can be a classmate, instructor, supervisor, or co-worker. An individual's personal evacuation instructions should be shared with their primary and alternate evacuation assistants. An evacuation assistant will assist individuals with disabilities to an evacuation area outside the building or to a safer area within a building. In addition to an evacuation assistant, a second person should immediately notify emergency personnel where an individual is located. Police or fire/rescue personnel will decide if the individual is safe at that location or evacuate the individual as necessary.

### Step 4: Be Familiar with Evacuation Options

Most Montgomery College buildings have accessible exits at the ground level floor that can be used during an emergency. However, in some buildings, people will need to use stairways to reach building exits. Become familiar with emergency exits, building evacuation routes, and campus evacuation areas. Identify primary and secondary evacuation routes from each classroom or office. Elevators are not to be used as an emergency exit unless instructed by emergency personnel. Emergency Evacuation Area maps are also posted in each building and at <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/emergency>

## Need information?

### Students – contact Disability Support Services

Germantown 240-567-7770

Rockville 240-567-5058

Takoma Park/Silver Spring 240-567-1480

## **Employees**

Office of Human Resources 240-567-5370

## **Evacuation Options**

Persons with disabilities must evacuate to the nearest exit which can be reached safely. Persons with disabilities have four basic evacuation options:

### **Horizontal Evacuation**

Use building exits to the outside ground level.

### **Stairway Evacuation**

Use steps to reach ground level exits from the building.

### **Stay in Place**

Unless danger is imminent, remaining in a room with an exterior window, a room telephone or cell phone, and a solid or fire-resistant door is a viable option. With this approach, the person should Call 9-1-1 and report his or her location directly. The fire/rescue dispatcher will relay the individual's location to on-site emergency personnel, who will determine the necessity for evacuation. If the phone lines fail or there is no cell phone signal, the individual can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

The "Stay in Place" approach may be more appropriate for sprinkler protected buildings or buildings where an area of refuge is not nearby or available. It may also be more appropriate for an occupant who is alone when the alarm sounds.

### **Area of Refuge**

With an evacuation assistant, go to an area of refuge away from obvious danger. The evacuation assistant will go to the building's designated emergency evacuation area and notify the on-site emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability. Emergency personnel will determine if further evacuation is necessary.

Stair landings are areas of refuge. For small stair landings crowded with other building occupants using the stairway for evacuation, taking a position in a corridor next to the stair is a good alternative until the stair landing is clear.

For false alarms or an isolated and contained fire, a person with a disability may not have to evacuate. The decision to evacuate will be made by the responding emergency personnel.

## **Disability Guidelines**

Prior planning and practicing of emergency evacuation routes are important in assuring a safe evacuation.

### **Mobility Impaired - Wheelchair**

Persons using wheelchairs should stay in place, or move to an area of refuge with their evacuation assistant when

the alarm sounds. The evacuation assistant should then go to the emergency evacuation area and notify the on-site emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability. If the person with a disability is alone, he/she should Call **9-1-1** and provide their present location and the area of refuge to which he/she is headed to.

If the stair landing is chosen as the area of refuge, please note that some campus buildings have relatively small stair landings, and wheelchair users are advised to wait until the heavy traffic has passed before entering the stairway.

Stairway evacuation of wheelchair users should be conducted by trained professionals (i.e. the fire/rescue or other trained emergency responders). Only in situations of extreme danger should untrained people attempt to evacuate wheelchair users. Moving a wheelchair down the stairs is never safe.

### **Mobility Impaired - Non-wheelchair**

Persons with mobility impairments, who are able to walk independently, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. If danger is imminent, the individual should wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. If there is no immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire, or unusual odor), the person with a disability may choose to stay in the building, using the other options, until emergency personnel arrive and determine if evacuation is necessary.

### **Hearing Impaired**

A number of campus buildings are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights but some buildings are not. Persons with hearing impairments may not hear audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Emergency instructions can be given by writing a short note explicitly stating to evacuate.

### **Visually Impaired**

Most people with a visual impairment will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route is likely different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating. The assistant should offer their elbow to the individual with a visual impairment and guide him or her through the evacuation route. During the evacuation the assistant should communicate as necessary to assure safe evacuation.

### **General Information**

The College's Disability Support Services (DSS) staff from each campus will provide a list of students each semester to the Office of Safety and Security specifying classroom locations and class schedules for all students requesting assistance in an emergency evacuation, as well as the nature of their disability, i.e. wheelchair, walker, cane, blind, and etc. DSS will provide updates to the Office of Safety and Security as warranted.

The Office of Human Resources will provide the Office of Safety and Security a list of all employees requesting assistance in an emergency evacuation and the office locations of the employees. The Office of Human Resources will provide updates to the Office of Safety and Security as warranted.

The Office of Safety and Security will keep a copy of the lists provided by DSS and the Office of Human Resources in their Emergency Contact Information. During an emergency, Security Officers will distribute copies to members of the Campus Response Team.

DSS sends a formal memo to all faculty and staff requesting that announcements, regarding procedures for individuals with disabilities, be made at the beginning of each semester class. Faculty should also put this notice in their syllabi asking those students that need assistance in an emergency to register with DSS or notify them directly.