

Emergency Evacuation Guidelines for Individuals with Disabilities

Rowan University – Division of Fire Safety



The following document offers a general guideline for safe and efficient facility evacuation for individuals with disabilities. These guidelines have been compiled from multiple sources, and have been organized into an array of well-known standards, best-practices and industry recommendations. Rowan University is fortunate to possess well-maintained fire systems for detection, notification, and suppression. These systems provide building occupants with the best chance of timely recognition and evacuation in a fire situation. That being said, the evacuation of individuals with disabilities should always be given high priority in an emergency situation. Preparation is key, and these recommendations serve to help these individuals, and those around them, **plan and practice** for a fire event.

Individuals with disabilities are their own greatest resource. They are the most familiar with their needs, and best understand what assistance they will require in the event of an emergency evacuation. Individuals are encouraged to establish a “buddy system” at the beginning of each semester, and make these needs known.

Buddy System:

- **Identify** roommates, classmates, staff members, Community Advisors, etc. who are willing and able to assist in the event of an emergency evacuation.
- **Plan** for an emergency by locating the closest, most accessible exit pathways; as well as safe locations such as fire stairwells (First) or sprinklered rooms with exterior windows and solid doors (Second).
- **Practice** for an emergency by familiarizing “buddies” with egress routes, refuge areas, and the level of assistance needed for evacuation.

Options During a Fire Emergency:

- **Evacuation** – If able, all occupants must evacuate the fire building using marked stairs and corridors. Utilize the assistance of “buddies” or other able-bodied occupants. Proceed down the stairs and fully exit the building on the ground level.
 - **Elevators will be inoperable during fire alarm activation.**
- **Area of Refuge (AOR)** – If in immediate danger and unable to fully evacuate the building, proceed to a stairwell/AOR. Stairwells/AOR’s are typically sprinklered areas protected by a one-hour fire rated assembly (i.e. fire rated door, walls and ceiling) which affords valuable protection. Firefighters are trained to operate in stairwells and to check these areas for occupants needing assistance. These areas may have a two-way emergency communication system. If they do not have one, use a cellphone to call for assistance, or send a “buddy” for help. **Dial (856)-256-4911 or 911**
- **Shelter in Place** – If you are unable to evacuate and not in immediate danger, remain in a room with a door and an exterior window (if possible). Close the door and seal all openings with clothing or towels. Contact emergency services with your location and evacuation needs. **Dial (856)-256-4911 or 911**

Emergency Communications

- **If you have a cell phone, keep it with you at all times.** This will allow you to contact the Rowan Public Safety Communications Center to advise them of your location and evacuation needs. The Rowan Communication Center is staffed 24 hours a day by trained personnel who will direct Rowan Public Safety and the Glassboro Fire Dept. to your exact location.
 - **Rowan Communications Center (856)-256-4911**
- If for any reason you cannot get through to the Rowan Communication Center, **immediately dial 911**, which will connect you to the Gloucester County Communication Center in Clayton.

As always, practice good fire prevention habits regarding cooking, overloaded outlets and open flames. And, please, report any dangerous conditions or activities to the Fire Safety Division or Public Safety immediately.

If you ever have any questions or concerns, or require additional information or assistance with specialized evacuation planning, please reach out to the Rowan University Fire Safety Office at (856)-256-5095 or FireSafety@Rowan.edu