

# **The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**

## **Evacuation Information for assisting students with disabilities**

This guideline highlights the general information of evacuation procedures for / assisting students with disabilities for fire and other building emergencies on campus. Faculty, staff, students and visitors should familiarize themselves with the facilities they are located in and identify their primary and secondary evacuation routes and refuges from each building they occupy. Please also find the University's respective emergency procedures / guidelines:

[Safety and Environment Protection Manual](#)

[Tropical Cyclone and Rainstorm Warning Arrangement](#)

[Get help: Emergencies](#)

[Fire Evacuation, Hall Facilities](#)

### **A. Assisting an evacuation on-the-spot**

As advised by the Health, Safety and Environment Office (HSEO), departments should consider assigning individuals from their departments to act as the Departmental Safety Officers (DSO). In the event of an evacuation, the DSO of the affected spot can provide the immediate response to the needs of individuals with reported Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans. DSO can assist the Campus Security Control Center and emergency personnel in ensuring a safe evacuation or provide them with valuable information as to the location and condition of the individual.

[List of Departmental Safety Officers](#)

### **B. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans**

Students with special educational needs, who need assistance during an emergency situation, must plan in advance and be aware of their own capabilities and limitations. They are strongly encouraged to work with the SEN Support of Counseling and Wellness Center to create a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) and get prepared for the below:

- Be familiar with own evacuation options.
- Inform respective party (e.g., instructor in a lab or sports course, student hall, etc.) that they would need assistance in an emergency, due to either a permanent or temporary condition, by providing the latest PEEP at the beginning of each academic term.
- In an emergency situation, ensure the Campus Security Control Center and first responders are aware of their locations.
- Identify at least 3 individuals who are willing to assist in case of an emergency.
- Update / meet SEN Support each academic year or whenever necessary to ensure their PEEPs are up-to-date.

## **C. Refuges**

A refuge is an area that is both separated from a fire by fire-resisting construction and provided with a safe route to a storey exit. Persons having difficulties in using the stairs should evacuate horizontally to a refuge, inform the Campus Security Control Center of the whereabouts of the persons, and wait for assistance.

In our main building, the ideal refuges are the lift lobbies. These lift lobbies are protected with at least a half-hour fire resistant period from the rest of the building. If practicable, lift lobbies in the next "fire zone" should be chosen as the designated refuge.

## **D. Evacuation advice to students with disabilities**

### **1. Students with mobility impairments**

Students using wheelchairs should stay in place or move to a refuge when the alarm sounds. If the student with a disability is alone, he/she should phone the Campus Security Control Center at 2358 8999 when on campus or the local emergency services at 999 with their present location. If the stair landing is chosen as the refuge, please note that some routes on campus have relatively small stair landings, and wheelchair users are recommended to wait until the heavy traffic has passed before entering the stairway. Stairway evacuation of wheelchair users should be conducted by trained professionals.

Non-Wheelchair individuals, 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 student with a disability may choose to stay in the building, using the other options, until the emergency personnel arrive and determine if evacuation is necessary.

### **2. Students with hearing impairment**

Most buildings are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights. In buildings with no strobe lights, individuals 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 explicit note to evacuate or through hand gestures.

### **3. Students with visual impairment**

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, students with visual impairment may need assistance in evacuating. DSO or anyone offering assistance 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.

## **E. Guidelines for Persons Assisting the Disabled**

Please note that the following guidelines are examples on how to help evacuate individuals with disabilities. They may not apply in every circumstance due to specific individual needs. For

instance, individuals may have conditions that can be aggravated or triggered if they are moved inappropriately, whereas environmental conditions (including smoke, loss of electricity or debris) may complicate evacuation efforts. Persons assisting a person with a disability should consider the available options and the risk of injury to oneself and others. In appropriate actions may worsen an emergency situation.

### **1. Wheelchair users**

- Do not lift an individual in a wheelchair. There is too much risk involved for both the lay rescuer and the non-ambulatory person such as back injury, loss of control of the wheelchair and person in it, tripping, falling. (Note: Wheelchairs have many movable or weak parts that are not constructed to withstand the stress of lifting, e.g., the seat bar, foot plates, wheels, movable arm rests, etc.)
- Be aware that some individuals in wheelchairs may have:
  - Minimal ability to move, and lifting them may be dangerous to their well-being
  - Very little upper trunk and neck strength
  - Respiratory conditions and/ or equipment that increase their vulnerability to smoke, vapors, or other airborne toxicants.
- Always ask the person having a disability what their needs and preferences are regarding:
  - Ways of being moved
  - Whether to extend or move extremities when lifting because of pain, braces, etc.
  - Whether a seat cushion or pad should be brought along
  - Aftercare, if the individual will be removed from the wheelchair
- If an individual is lifted from a wheelchair during evacuation:
  - Ask others to bring the wheelchair.
  - When the wheelchair is left behind, remove it from the stairwell and ensure it does not obstruct exit routes.
  - Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its master, if possible.
  - Reunite the person with the wheelchair as soon as possible.

### **2. Persons using crutches, canes or walkers**

- Ask the person how you can best assist them in evacuating the area.
- Consider the evacuation options and the suitability of carrying the person. Carrying options include:
  - Using a 2-person, lock-arm position
  - Having the individual sit on a sturdy chair (preferably with arms) that is then lifted and carried
  - Read about Evacuation chairs below for more information on safely transporting non-ambulatory individuals during an evacuation.
- Assist mobility-restricted people to a refuge or out of the building.

### **3. Persons with low vision or blindness:**

- Tell the person the nature of the emergency and offer your arm for guidance. This is the preferred method when acting as a "sighted guide."
- Give verbal instructions to advise about the safest route or direction, using estimated distances and directional terms.
- As you walk, tell the person where you are and where obstacles are located.
- When you reach safety, orient the person to their surroundings and ask if they need further assistance.
- Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its master, if possible.

#### **4. Persons who are deaf or hard to hear**

- Write a note to tell the person of the situation, the nearest evacuation route, and where to meet outside. (Sample script: "FIRE! Go out the rear door on your right. NOW. Meet outside on the front lawn.")
- Turn the light switch on and off to gain their attention, and then indicate through gestures or in writing what is happening and what to do. Do not use the light switch technique if you smell natural gas in the area.
- Give visual instructions to advise about the safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.
- Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its master, if possible.

#### **F. Enquiry**

##### **1. On safety and evacuation procedures:**

Health, Safety and Environment Office

Website: [hseo.ust.hk](http://hseo.ust.hk)

Email: [safety@ust.hk](mailto:safety@ust.hk)

Tel: 2358 6509

##### **2. On PEEP / students with special educational needs:**

SEN Support, Counseling and Wellness Center

Website: [sen.ust.hk](http://sen.ust.hk)

Email: [sen@ust.hk](mailto:sen@ust.hk)

Tel: 3469 2497

##### **3. Campus Security Control Center**

Tel: 2358 8999