



Safety Services Guidance on Evacuation of disabled persons

Key word(s):	PEEPs, disabled staff, students and visitors
Target audience:	Line Managers, Disability Coordinators, school or local safety advisors, event organisers, any member of staff inviting visitors onto University premises

Introduction	2
Principles for disabled evacuation.....	3
Evacuation Equipment	3
General Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs)	5
Considerations for the completion of a PEEP	6
Further information	11
Appendix 1: Examples of visitor PEEPs	12

Introduction

1. The University has a responsibility under health and safety and equality legislation to ensure that all people, including disabled people can evacuate the building under their control safely in the event of a fire. Many disabled people are able to evacuate buildings safely in an emergency without assistance or with minimal help from others. However, some individuals may require further assistance.
2. A general emergency escape plan (or GEEP) should be in place for each University building which gives information on the layout, location of assembly points, evacuation procedures, available equipment, and communication devices in the building. However, these need to be phased in across campus, so are not in place in all buildings yet. It is intended that all occupied buildings, including multi-occupancy, across all campuses will have a GEEP; to be undertaken by the Fire Safety Team right.
3. A formal plan of action for exiting a building during an emergency, known as a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), may be required for staff, students or visitors with health, mobility, sight, or specific cognitive difficulties and/or the D/deaf. A PEEP is a bespoke 'escape plan' for individuals with known needs who may not be able to reach an ultimate place of safety unaided, or within a satisfactory period, in the event of any emergency.
4. The PEEP should be tailored to the individual's needs and explain the method of evacuation as a stage-by-stage process, for all parts of the University the individual may use. The PEEP will set out any reasonable adjustments necessary for such individuals to maintain their personal safety in the event of an evacuation and this may include the provision of specialised equipment.
5. In addition to the requirement for PEEPs in relation to permanent disability, there may be the need for a temporary PEEP (e.g. someone with a broken leg), which would mean temporary measures be introduced for a period, or until a set review date. The need for these would be picked up by their line manager for members of staff or a tutor/Res life coordinator for a student.
6. Visitors to the University of Manchester come for a variety of reasons. Some may be present for one-off, short periods of time and have little knowledge of the building and its systems, whilst others may use our facilities again and again, and may become familiar with the building layout, sound of the alarm, or day of the weekly test. Some parts of the University are more likely to have disabled visitors than others. No single guidance document can cover this wide range of scenarios, but risk assessments can be used to identify the specific needs of staff, students and visitors and to develop personal emergency escape plans (PEEP) where appropriate. Some practical examples are given below in Appendix 1.

Principles for disabled evacuation

7. Disability is widely variable and therefore disabled people should be involved in producing their own personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP). Their preferences should be taken into account and followed wherever possible.
8. The primary objective in developing a PEEP is to identify how the person can be assisted to a place of **ultimate safety**, i.e. outside the building where people can move away from the building. The immediate evacuation of disabled people may not always be possible and therefore buildings are designed to provide them with places of **relative safety**.
9. There are two basic ways to do this. Either by:
 - the provision of designated refuges (usually within protected staircases); or
 - horizontal evacuation to another part of the building, through a fire compartment line (which will be noted in the GEEP). Buildings are designed as individual fire compartments so moving through a door from the affected compartment to an unaffected compartment provides relative safety.

Note: People with mobility difficulties may need assistance to descend stairs from upper floors. Commonly wheelchair users can self-evacuate from ground floor accommodation but this is not always the case.

10. A **refuge** is a place of relative safety, usually within a protected staircase or corridor with at least 30 minutes fire protection. Disabled people can safely await the necessary assistance in such places. A refuge will have a communications system that enables people in the refuge to talk to people arriving to provide their assistance.
11. **Horizontal Evacuation:** Conventionally, emergency evacuations involve horizontal travel to a staircase, vertical travel down the staircase to reach a building exit and then horizontal travel outside to the designated assembly point. People with mobility issues often cannot achieve vertical travel without assistance, so it is helpful if they can evacuate only horizontally, to a place of relative safety where they await further help and assistance.

Evacuation Equipment

12. **Evacuation Equipment:** University buildings are equipped with Evac+Chairs and/or ResQmats. The longer-term intention is to standardise on Evac+Chairs but ResQmats will remain in use until full standardisation can be achieved.



There are also stair climbers available in some buildings where evacuation is required from basements. More information about these can be obtained from the University's fire safety team.

Using lifts in evacuations

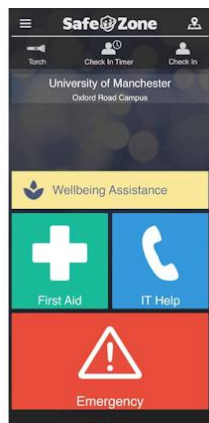
13. The default position is that lifts should not be used to evacuate people from upper floors. There are a few exceptions to this convention; which have to be specifically agreed with the University's Fire Safety Team, where firefighting lifts can be used with the appropriate staff training and resourcing.

Disabled Communication aids:

14. Refuges are equipped with **communications systems**. These connect only to a panel within the building at present (although estates and facilities are investigating whether these communications could be routed through to CSAS control room directly). They only permit one person to talk at a time – similar to "walkie-talkie" radios and therefore, because they are not used in the same way as telephones, known disabled people (such as staff or students) need to be trained in their use.



15. In most cases it will take some time before members of CSAS staff are available to answer the emergency call point, as their first duty is to investigate the source of the fire and contact the fire service if necessary. Therefore, all disabled staff and students should be notified of this.
16. In an emergency staff and students can also contact Campus Support and Security Services by calling the number on the back of their University identity card from their mobile phone.
17. [SafeZone](#) is a free to download application which can be downloaded to almost any mobile device. In the event of an emergency, the app allows people to speak to Campus Support & Security (CSAS) at the touch of a button and to automatically quickly share their location and details with CSAS, who will be able to get the right assistance to the point of need and. The app also contains a GPS locator which assists responders finding the person in need of assistance.



18. For the emergency evacuation of people with disability, [SafeZone](#) is an additional safety measure that supplements fixed disabled communications positioned within refuges and all disabled staff and students should be encouraged to download the app to their mobile phones.

General Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs)

19. In many cases it may be that the general emergency evacuation arrangements in place in the building are sufficient for individual staff or students to self evacuate, or evacuate with assistance without the need for a bespoke, personal emergency evacuation plan.
20. Visitors with disabilities may be known in advance but this will not always be the case for all buildings but particularly so in our public buildings – e.g. Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery, John Rylands Library, Jodrell Bank Observatory etc.
21. It is therefore essential that all staff are aware of the general provisions for disabled evacuation, their locations and methods of use.

Considerations for the completion of a PEEP

22. The PEEP should be produced following a conversation between the individual staff member or student and their line manager, tutor or disability coordinator. The University has a [questionnaire](#) that can be used to establish the needs of the individual before meeting to discuss the actions required to meet these individual needs. Ideally this would be completed several weeks in advance to allow person completing the PEEP to make any necessary enquiries about how to meet these needs.
23. During the meeting to discuss individual requirements, agreement should be sought on how the individual will be evacuated safely from the building if required, and the agreed procedures would be recorded, using a [template PEEP](#). The following types of disability are relatively common but there are many others which will potentially require consideration and reasonable adjustment.
24. If assistance is required from colleagues or staff, acting as “buddies”, then consideration should be given to ensuring sufficient cover is available in the light of local working patterns.
25. The completed PEEP would be shared on a (need to know) basis only, with permission of the individual.

People with mobility issues

26. As a general provision, University buildings are equipped with Evac+Chairs and/or ResQmats. The longer-term intention is to standardise on Evac+Chairs but some ResQmats will remain in use until full standardisation can be achieved. Relevant staff therefore need to be appropriately trained to be proficient in the use of both pieces of equipment. A combined training course (TLCF304) in the use of Evac Chairs and ResQ Mats can be booked on through the University’s staff [training catalogue](#).
27. Other equipment may also be necessary, dependant on known individual requirements (e.g. stair climbers, bariatric evacuation chairs) and additional training may be required. Further advice, if required is available from the University’s Fire Team.
28. If, due to the nature of the disability, the individual cannot be moved from their wheelchair without risk of serious injury, and the individual cannot be located solely where they can self-evacuate, a discussion should take place with the University’s Fire Team (see further information section at the end of this document).

29. Users of powered wheelchairs should be aware of the University's Fire Safety Advice Note 9: Powered Wheelchairs, Mobility Scooters and PLEVs; which prohibits the charging of powered wheelchairs on escape routes or within protected lobbies/stairs/routes on campus (due to the fire risk of doing so). Where students/staff need mobility aids because of mobility issues, advice should be sought from the Fire Team regarding charging within University buildings (see further information section at the end of this document).

D/deaf people

30. In most University Academic buildings Deaf Alerters or Visual Alarm Devices (VAD's) have been installed. D/deaf staff/students that are likely to be working in an isolated area are encouraged to advise an appropriate member of staff of this fact, so that they may be notified of any alarm. In certain Halls, Deaf Alerter or VAD's have been installed and can be augmented by vibrating pillows which are available from the accommodation office, please contact [DASS](#) if required.

People with visual impairment

31. Many visually impaired people have a guide dog to assist them; the dogs need to also be considered in respect of planning for emergency evacuations.

Step 1 of a PEEP: Planning for getting to a place of relative safety

32. The PEEP should follow the "hierarchy of control" and wherever possible; wherever possible steps should be taken to enable the disabled person to be able to evacuate themselves from the building, e.g. by timetabling classes to be in rooms on the ground floor. Where this is not possible, consideration should be given to the potential for horizontal evacuation to another area of a building, or evacuation via an evacuation or fire fighter's lift (if available).
33. The PEEP should provide information and guidance on, for example:
- alarms systems and the expected responses;
 - encouraging the disabled person to wait a few minutes for crowding on a staircase to reduce;
 - in buildings with a 2 stage alarm, encouraging the disabled person to leave during the first stage alarm;
 - arrangements for lone working;
 - requesting assistance to locate the nearest exit route e.g. accompanying them
34. If necessary, the disabled person should be given information to enable them to identify and use designated refuge areas and their communication systems, assisting them to move to a place of 'relative safety' as a first step in the event of

an emergency. This may be a refuge point that will usually be located on the same floor and not require stairs to access. If necessary, "buddies" (which may include personal assistants or carers, colleagues or other students) may need to be allocated to disabled persons to help them in an emergency.

35. The PEEP must address the steps to be taken once at the refuge point, which may include the disabled person and/or their buddy communicating with those responding to the fire alarm activation. The individual may be able to remain at the refuge point whilst Campus Support and Campus Support and Security (CSS) investigate the cause of the activation and reset the alarm. However, the plan should also include any need for them to be evacuated by staff using an evacuation aid or (in rare cases and where available) an evacuation lift (see step 2 below), if considered necessary.
36. For those individuals **who do not require mobility aids** (such as wheelchairs), or those that do not require assistance to descend stairs (for example, people with visual impairment or the D/deaf), the PEEP should follow the GEEP and include the arrangements outlined in paragraph 32.
37. For those individuals **who use mobility aids** (such as wheelchairs) or require assistance to descend stairs, the PEEP may identify the need for buddies to assist individuals to reach a safe refuge and to facilitate communications with Campus Support and Security staff. Consideration should be given to (where possible) placing staff and students in ground floor rooms for teaching, where timetabling allows.
38. A PEEP should document any agreed means of communication e.g. use of the SafeZone App, or storage of a contact number for Campus Support and Security (CSAS) in the individual's mobile phone to enable direct communication with CSAS during any alarm activation, or use of the refuge communication aids. Note: Mobile phone signal strengths in buildings can vary and should be checked first.

Step 2: Planning for moving from relative safety to a place of ultimate safety

39. The second step of the development of a PEEP is to determine how to assist the disabled person with moving safely from the refuge point (or other place of relative safety), to a place of ultimate safety i.e. to the assembly point outside of the building, in the event of an actual identified fire/smoke situation.
40. The PEEP needs to include contingency plans in the event the place of relative safety is compromised e.g. if the refuge point (or the route to it) is compromised by smoke, heat or flames and they are unable to turn around to find another refuge point on the same floor.
41. Evacuation aids are provided, but how this equipment will be deployed and by whom will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and included within the PEEP. Not

all wheelchair users, for example, will be comfortable or able to transfer from their wheelchair to an evacuation aid. Some may require aids in order to transfer from their chair. Further advice should be taken from the fire team, or from the University's Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS).

42. The onward mobility of the user should also be considered when they arrive at the assembly point; leaving their own wheelchair in the refuge would potentially present serious difficulties to those dependent upon them.
43. It is essential that sufficient numbers of trained people are available to provide such physical assistance whenever people with mobility issues are in the building e.g. provision of assistance to cover for absence, or hybrid working patterns. This requirement must be considered during the PEEP planning process.
44. This second stage can be challenging, and those preparing PEEPs may need to involve others for further advice. Initially the individual preparing the PEEP should follow their local arrangements (usually in the school or directorate health and safety policy) for obtaining advice and assistance, such as from a local or school safety adviser, or a disability coordinator.
45. In complex cases it may be necessary to convene a PEEPS working group for further advice and support relating to: any necessary physical adjustments, or the use of specific evacuation aid equipment. Initial contact should be made through the [Faculty / Directorate Health and Safety Manager / Support Officer](#) or equivalent, who will convene the group as appropriate. This group would comprise of the individual, the person responsible for completing the PEEP and relevant stakeholders such as Occupational Health, Faculty Health and Safety Manager / Support Officer or equivalent, Estates & Facilities Fire Team, the Disability Advisory and Support Services and Safety Services.

Arrangements for disabled visitors

46. For buildings that are open to the public (for example, Manchester Museum, The Whitworth), or where visitors are attending conferences, events or clinical appointments (for example, in Carys Bannister Building), specific documented local fire safety arrangements should be in place which detail how visitors with or without disabilities will be evacuated from a building safely in the event of an emergency **(general emergency evacuation plans, or GEEPs)**.
47. For events, conferences or appointments which are organised in advance, the person making the invitation (the host or the event organiser) is responsible for making adequate enquiries at the booking stage, so that steps can be taken to manage any emergency evacuation. Visitor hosts and organisers should use their publicity material to encourage disabled visitors to make themselves known at an early stage, in order to determine and discuss the need for a more specific PEEP with the guest. The information provided about the need for emergency evacuation arrangements

will need to be tailored to the event style; it could be incorporated into event advertising material, formal letters of invitation, discrete notices at reception and registration desks, and similar.

48. When an individual disability is declared prior to the visit, the host or organiser should consider the arrangements that can reasonably be put in place and record this in a PEEP. This may include deciding upon a more suitable or accessible venue, or ensuring a member of University Staff is responsible for the safe evacuation of the visitor. Decisions must be taken on a case-by-case basis. If a written PEEP is required e.g. for regular visitors, an [example](#) form is provided.
49. Visitors with sight or hearing disabilities will usually require assistance, so they should be accompanied by someone who can provide the necessary information about what is happening and guide them towards their exit. They may be allowed to bring somebody with them to provide this support, or the University may need to provide this for them.
50. Where evacuation chairs or mats are provided in buildings, the host or event organiser must ensure that they are aware of the location of the equipment and that those trained to use the chair or mat are available and are aware of the location of the visitor should an emergency evacuation become necessary.
51. Where facilities are commonly used (e.g. examinations halls, refectories etc), appropriate signage will already be displayed at the normal entrances to indicate any horizontal evacuation routes, location of refuge(s), and any other particular arrangements or means of summoning assistance.
52. In addition, event organisers could consider producing laminated cards for visitors which show the same information. The card could be issued at the start of the visit and returned when leaving. This could also form part of a meeting or conference checking in and out procedure.
53. Open access to many of the University buildings presents special challenges in identifying those with mobility difficulties. Visitors with mobility difficulties should be encouraged to make themselves known to both building attendants at reception (if available) and to their host so that arrangements can be put in place to facilitate the disabled visitors' safe and swift evacuation from the building should this become necessary.
54. Whilst some visitors to the University may declare their disability prior to the visit, the disabilities of many visitors may not become apparent until their time of arrival at the University. It is therefore necessary to establish the principles by which those involved can carry out the risk assessment and develop the necessary procedures.

These principles include:

- Identifying those visitors who wish for, or may need assistance
- Devising a means of knowing where they are at the time of any emergency
- Ensuring the visitor is aware of their own responsibility in making themselves known to staff who may offer assistance
- Designating those who can provide the necessary assistance
- Giving training, information and any other necessary help to those who may support the disabled visitor.

Further information

55. Further information, including the University's arrangements for evacuation, template questionnaires and for recording the outcome of PEEPs discussions (the PEEP itself) can be found on [Safety Services website](#).

56. For specific queries regarding PEEPs, contact either the University's Fire Team (for technical fire related queries) by emailing the Principal Fire Safety Officer: russell.james@manchester.ac.uk or the Deputy Fire Safety Officer on: paul.duggan@manchester.ac.uk or the [Disability Advisory Support Service](#) for disability related queries).

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Appendix 1: Examples of visitor PEEPs

Example 1: Manchester Museum - open to the public; unknown and unpredictable numbers of visitors with disabilities.

Front of House staff on site at all times during opening hours to assist visitors and are trained in the evacuation of disabled people using evacuation chairs.

Front of House staff are trained on the correct use of refuge points and on when to move visitors from protected areas in the event of fire.

Example 2: Carys Bannister Building - a research and clinical setting, people with sight impairments selected to attend. Disabled visitors of known numbers and appointment times.

Clinic areas for this group are located on the ground floor. In the event of an emergency, staff are instructed to assist any individual to a place of safety outside, and if appropriate, into the nearest building not under alarm conditions.

Example 3: Open Days and ad hoc events

UCAS open day – organisers notified the School Safety Advisor in advance that a wheelchair user was attending.

Organiser sought advice and undertook a risk assessment, considering which areas of the building would be open to the visitor. Site staff were advised about how to evacuate the visitor to the nearest refuge point, to stay with them and phone Campus Support and Security to find out if they needed to move in the event of an emergency.

Example 4: Unexpected visitor with evacuation needs

A visitor in a wheelchair arrives without declaring their need for assistance during evacuation for a meeting with a member of University staff. The person inviting them to the University should carry out a dynamic risk assessment, move meetings or other commitments to ground floor facilities if practicable to do so, and ensure they know the location of the nearest refuge point(s). They should check that the visitor is able to reach the refuge point, and a member of University Staff should stay with them to contact Campus Support and Security about the need to evacuate.