



King's Academy Ringmer

Means of Escape for Disabled People Fire and Emergency Evacuation Guidelines

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Fire and Emergency Evacuation Guidance

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide guidance on the Emergency Evacuation requirements at King's Academy Ringmer where employees, visitors and service users with mobility issues, some sensory and some learning impairments would find it difficult to leave a building in the event of an emergency. It sets out the key issues which need to be taken account of both in terms of building design and management systems, whilst taking account of service provision.

2. Access Requirements

It must be remembered that any restrictions placed on access to King's Academy Ringmer by people with mobility or any other relevant impairments must have very sound health and safety justification. Any unnecessary restrictions are likely to be unlawful under the Equalities Act. Any such proposal to restrict access needs to be approved by the Governing Board and must be discussed with the school legal provider.

3. **Whose responsibility is the Emergency Evacuation of People from our workplaces and public buildings?**

This responsibility always falls on the occupier of the premises and this is set out within the various Guidance documents issued for premises in relation to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which became effective on the 1st October 2006. The fire risk assessment process (see the Fire Safety Management Policy) makes it quite clear that any risk to life from fire should be reflected with appropriate measures taken to offset those risks identified. Allowing people with physical, some sensory and some learning impairments into a building by means of lifts or other powered systems but without providing for suitable means of egress is increasing the life risk, quite possibly to an unacceptable level. So if access is given to any particular area within any of our premises, then suitable and sufficient egress arrangements must also be put in place to ensure the safe evacuation of **all** people.

The Fire and Rescue Service are not responsible for the **evacuation** of anyone (either “able” or “less able”) - it is the occupier’s duty to have in place suitable and sufficient evacuation plans. Therefore, Managers must have in place suitable procedures to safely evacuate people from all areas, including any Refuge areas, in an emergency situation. The Fire and Rescue Service does, of course, have a duty to **rescue** people. The term “rescue” infers that someone must be in a life-threatening situation requiring the immediate intervention by the fire service.

In some of our larger premises where there are sufficient staff to train floor wardens in evacuation techniques for people with relevant impairments, using suitable evacuation equipment where needed, it should be possible to meet the legislative requirements and the use of a refuge area (see definition on page 7) or temporary place of safety will be acceptable. However, this will generally only be suitable for known employees, students, clients etc. who, where appropriate, would be able to contribute to the development of their personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) – see 6 below.

It may be necessary to anticipate the type of assistance disabled members of the public may need and draw up generic evacuation plans and train all staff in the use of evacuation equipment.

4. **What fire precautions should be put in place?**

Means of Escape

It is essential that all the occupants of any building are able to leave quickly from an area that may involve or be in danger from fire. The principles involved when designing escape strategies include planning and protecting escape routes leading to safety both horizontally and vertically, ensuring the construction and surface finishing is of adequate fire resistance, the segregation of high risk areas and the provision of a means of giving warning of fire and, where appropriate, detecting outbreaks of fire.

The structural provision regarding means of escape still assumes that the users are able-bodied and therefore the presumption of independent capability to use steps and negotiate buildings is clearly inadequate when dealing with the safe egress of the people with relevant impairments. It will, therefore, be necessary to incorporate features to accommodate the needs of these people.

This can simply be an extension of management procedures, inclusion of something extra like refuges or suitable evacuation lifts or even the provision of evacuation equipment, such as evacuation chairs, and staff trained in their use, to safely evacuate people with mobility impairments.

When the impairment in question is other than physical, improvements could be an upgrade of general signage, sounders and training staff. However, some people will not be able to negotiate stairs whether it is steps between changes of level within a storey or an escape stair.

To accommodate wheelchair user's, ramps can be installed, where appropriate, to deal with changes of level. Where flights of stairs are concerned a common approach has been to provide refuges within the stairway enclosure. Such refuge areas must have specific requirements in their design and should:

- Be constructed from materials providing fire resistances to BS 5588 Part 8 / BS 476
- Be protected by self-closing fire doors with a minimum fire resistance of 30 minutes
- Be protected from the effects of smoke and other products of combustion (intumescent backed cold smoke seal)
- Be clearly signed

(Also see the description on page 7)

To assist in the management of the property and to provide users with the necessary level of reassurance, a specifically designed refuge should ideally be fitted with a suitable two-way communication system. Such communications systems are important, not only to allow the Manager to provide the necessary staff assistance to the appropriate areas as quickly as possible but also to keep anyone using the refuge informed of all emergency-related developments whilst they wait for assistance. Communication systems and specific signage may not be appropriate for a temporary place of safety e.g. a protected stairwell.

When incorporating a refuge area into a building it is essential that its location does not affect the means of escape and people can exit without having to negotiate round wheel chairs. The use of refuges areas alone, with the associated requirements for specialist trained staff and evacuation equipment should be avoided wherever possible. It is recommended that these are only installed where other (safer) alternatives are not practicable. Where level egress to an external place of safety is not achievable it is recommended that fully protected evacuation lifts are considered as the preferred option to enable a compliant evacuation plan to be developed.

Where existing refuge areas are already in place, a suitable and sufficient risk assessment must be carried out and appropriate general and personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPS) – see section below - developed to take account of both employee and service user needs. If an adequate evacuation plan cannot be implemented, consideration must be given to adaptations to the building (such as the installation of fire sprinkler or mist systems) and/or changes to service provision (e.g. moving services to alternative premises or relocating them to another part of the building which would allow appropriate emergency egress.)

The use of a refuge area must be subject to a specific fire risk assessment. In such cases it is possible that the risk assessment will result in access limitations for those who cannot be safely evacuated. As this is likely to be tested in law it is essential that the risk assessment is carried out thoroughly and where appropriate incorporates input from disabled service user groups, disability advisers etc. and, if necessary, advice from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

5. Fire Alarms

As far as fire detection systems are concerned any fire alarm system would be designed from a risk based approach and should therefore make allowances for incorporating a means of alerting people with sensory impairments of any fire alarm situation.

Fire alarm warnings for people with impaired hearing

Impairment of hearing does not mean that a person is completely insensitive to sound and perception of some types of conventional audible alarm signals and could therefore require no additional special provision for warning of fire. However, there are some situations where a person with impaired hearing could be alerted by others in the close proximity to the need for evacuation. Of course, this will necessitate that procedures are in place to ensure that others provide the necessary warning to the person with impaired hearing.

If the occupants in question tend to be situated for a large proportion of their time within a selected area of the building, visual alarm signals or beacons might be appropriate in that area (and associated toilets). If they sleep in the building, tactile devices, with or without associated visual alarm devices, might need to be considered. These devices are usually placed under pillows or mattresses, and wired into fire alarm device circuits or triggered by radio signals.

However, upgrading an existing alarm system with xenon beacons could require considerable rewiring, upgrading of power supplies and expense. The invention and continued development of LED products, however, has allowed the addition of beacons to a system, in most cases, with little resource impact. In some instances, existing sounders can merely be swapped for combined sounder / LED beacons with no impact to wiring or power supply capacity.

Visual alarms are restricted to line of sight, so unlike sounders, where some reliance is made on the sound to spread, with beacons they will have to be provided in the area the person with the hearing impairment occupies.

Other fire alarm warning methods include the use of vibrating radio pagers, which are intended for carrying by the hearing impaired and are capable of giving visual and/or tactile signals.

Manual call point height

A common misconception is that manual call points need to be fitted at a lower height for wheelchair disabled personnel to activate. BS 5839 states that all call points should be fixed at a height of 1.4 m above finished floor level, at easily accessible and conspicuous positions. However a lower mounting height is acceptable in circumstances where there is a high likelihood that the first person to raise an alarm of fire will be a wheelchair user. Of course, the 1.4 m figure is arbitrary and reflects long established custom and practice.

6. What is a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)?

Management of an emergency situation is critical in any building. As management have such a large part to play when evacuating a premises, the processes involved should be in written form and easy to follow and all persons should be totally familiar with the buildings emergency plan.

Various problems can occur when evacuating people with mobility impairments but these can be negated through simple procedures. The first step would be to identify who within the building is involved. This becomes problematic when the general public are involved and this would have to be taken into account and arrangements put in place. The appointment of fire wardens to specific areas or floors could be introduced and they could have various tasks to ensure a smooth evacuation of the building is undertaken and people who need assistance receive it. It is also essential that any evacuation plan is practised to ensure that all staff are aware of what to do, where to go and who to report to. This then allows for staff to be trained in specific tasks, e.g. ensuring people with relevant impairments have reached their respected refuge area or have successfully been evacuated using evacuation chairs if the need arises.

The personal emergency evacuation plan is designed to ensure that people with relevant impairments have a planned escape procedure that may or may not include assistance from others. The plan is a record of information gathered and, where appropriate, agreed between the people concerned. This plan should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that conditions and requirements have not changed. The plan should be developed for existing relevant members of staff and for all new employees who may have a relevant impairment, identified by either themselves or by their manager. A plan (PEEP) should also be developed for known service users (e.g. those in residential care and day care establishments) and students where the local evacuation plan would not be sufficient to meet their particular needs.

The plan is to determine an escape strategy with the individual, devise a means of locating the person in the building when the alarm is sounded and designating people to give assistance if required. The emergency evacuation plan is not designed to make up for any inadequacy in the means of escape of the building. The plan may be unique to the individual, taking into account the type of disability and the characteristics of the building layout and facilities provided. Management must also take account of any temporary disabilities that can occur (latter stages of pregnancy, leg injuries, etc.) within a property and put in place suitable 'temporary' procedures as necessary to ensure the safe evacuation of these people.

The plan will only work successfully if the information gained is accurate. The best source of information is from the people themselves and for staff with particular needs this should be obtained when commencing employment. Once this information has been obtained, the next stage would be to set up a discussion to develop a plan, ensuring that there is full consultation with them about the efficacy of the proposals. Training in how procedures affect them must be included as part of their induction.

Once the plan has been finalised it can be used as a record to show that the evacuation strategy has been agreed with all parties involved. Facilities that are already provided can be detailed within the plan. It will also highlight to management any deficiencies with the existing facilities and the areas where improvement is necessary, whether these be physical or procedural.

The plan must be completed by someone who is able to identify the needs of a wide range of disabilities.

7. How do I develop a PEEP?

See Appendix 1: Guidance on Developing a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

8. Further Advice

If you need further guidance or advice on ensuring that the Emergency Plan for your premises is suitable and sufficient, please contact:

Health and Safety Team (for general advice)
Tel: 01273 336306

Appendix 1: Guidance on Developing a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Aim

The aim of a PEEP is to provide people who cannot get themselves out of a building unaided with the necessary information and assistance to be able to manage their escape to a place of safety and to ensure that the correct level of assistance is always available.

Responsibilities

The Manager/Responsible Person must talk to disabled staff, service users, students, etc. to assess whether they require any assistance in the event of an emergency. If someone requires assistance the Emergency Egress Questionnaire should be completed. This should be completed by the Responsible Person or their nominated representative and, if possible, in liaison with the individual who has the mobility impairment.

Writing the PEEP

From the information gathered in the questionnaire, a PEEP should be developed.

Given the unique characteristics of buildings and the need for a PEEP to take account of an individual's capabilities, disabled persons who regularly use different buildings may have to have a separate PEEP for each building.

If assistance with escape is required, the extent of such assistance should be identified in the PEEP i.e. the number of assistants and the methods to be used. It is necessary to ensure that there is cover for absences, and the assistants may require training.

Once a PEEP has been established, arrangements should be put in place to ensure that these are practiced and it is recommended that these are carried out separately to the standard test evacuation. The needs of the individual should be considered and therefore it may be inappropriate for the individual to be involved in the test evacuation. In these cases, a volunteer to take their place should be identified.

Appendix 2: Evacuation in an Emergency

Assisting wheelchair users down stairs

Where disabled persons are located above or below the ground floor there are a number of considerations. In all the following cases the Fire Officer and/or ESCC Property will be able to give more advice with identifying Refuges and Evacuation Lifts.

a) Temporary Refuges:

A refuge is a designated temporary safe place where disabled people can wait for assistance. It is an area that is both separated from a fire by fire resisting construction and provides a safe route to final exit e.g. the head of a protected stairway - where there is sufficient space. The provision of a refuge will permit a staged evacuation to be implemented. A refuge area must be clearly signed and should be of sufficient size to accommodate both people using it as a refuge and any people passing through on their way out of the building.

Refuges should only be defined after consultation with the ESCC Property as the requirements for fire separation and structure are very specific.

b) Lifts:

Most lifts cannot be used in an emergency. Any lift used for the evacuation of disabled people should be an "evacuation lift." The individual lift servicing contractor will be able to tell you if and in what circumstances a lift may be used in the event of a fire. If you have any difficulties in obtaining this information, please contact ESCC Property.

If you believe that there is a suitable lift, ESCC Property will advise on the correct procedure for using the lift as an evacuation lift and will also advise on the signage and training necessary.

c) Safe Routes:

A PEEP should contain details of the necessary escape route(s). Clear unobstructed gangways and floor layouts should be considered at the planning stage.

It is especially important to ensure that security devices are all able to be operated by the evacuating persons.

It is also necessary to ensure that there are (as many as possible) alternative routes and that the routes are not excessively long.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired persons

Generally, most deaf people working alongside hearing colleagues / students will not require special equipment, providing they have been made aware of what to do in the event of a fire. They will be able to see and understand the behaviour of those around them.

However, deaf or hearing impaired persons working alone may need an alternative method of being alerted to an emergency. For example many alarm systems have visual indicators in the form of a flashing light, or vibrating pager systems can be used.

Blind and Partially Sighted persons

Staff, service users, students, etc. should be offered orientation training and, where applicable, this must include alternative ways out of the building. If a blind person uses a guide dog it is important that the dog is also given ample opportunity to learn these routes.

Training

To be effective, any Emergency Plan depends on the ability of staff to respond efficiently. Staff will therefore receive instructions, practical demonstrations and training appropriate to their responsibilities. This may include some or all of the following elements:

- Fire drills for staff, services users, students, etc.
- Specific training/instruction for nominated members of staff e.g. Fire Wardens
- Specific training/instruction in the use of Fire Extinguishers etc.

Appendix 3: Emergency Egress Questionnaire for Disabled Person

This questionnaire is intended to be completed by disabled persons to assist the development of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). Please provide as much information to enable the establishment to develop a suitable plan.

Once developed the Plan will be the intended means of escape in the event of an emergency (including drills). If the practice drills identify concerns in the implementation of the evacuation, then please contact the Premises Manager for assistance in finding suitable solutions.

1. **Why you should fill in the form**

As the establishment has a legal responsibility to protect you from fire risks and ensure your health and safety. The PEEP will be developed based on the information you provide.

2. **What will happen when you have completed the form?**

You will be provided with any additional information necessary about the emergency egress procedures in the building(s) you attend.

If you need assistance, the "Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan" will specify what type of assistance you need. There may be some parts of the most appropriate premises where safe evacuation cannot yet be provided without alterations to the building/structure. In these circumstances the way forward will be discussed with you.

Name: _____

Location

1. **Where are you based for most of the time?**

Please name: the building, the floor and the room number.

2. Do you routinely use more than one location in this building?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you feel it is necessary please provide further details below. (Please list the buildings and floors you used in each building)

Awareness of emergency evacuation procedures

3. Are you aware of the emergency evacuation procedures which operate in the building(s) you attend?

YES ☐ NO ☐

4. Do you require written emergency evacuation procedures?

YES ☐ NO ☐

4a Do you require written emergency procedures to be supported by BSL interpretation?

YES ☐ NO ☐

4b Do you require the emergency evacuation procedures to be in Braille?

YES ☐ NO ☐

4c Do you require the emergency evacuation procedure to be on tape?

YES ☐ NO ☐

4d Do you require the emergency evacuation procedures to be in large print?

YES ☐ NO ☐

5. Are the signs which mark emergency routes and exits clear enough?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Emergency Alarm

6. Can you hear the fire alarm(s) in your place(s) or work?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

7. Could you raise the alarm if you discovered a fire?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

Assistance

8. Do you need assistance to get out of your place of work in an emergency?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

If **NO** please go to Question 12

9. Is anyone designated to assist you to get out in an emergency?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

If **NO** please go to Question 11. If **YES** give name(s) and location(s)

10. Is the arrangement with your assistant(s) a formal arrangement?

(A formal arrangement is an arrangement specified for them by the Head of Department or written into their job description or by some other procedure.)

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

10a Are you always in easy contact with those designated to help you?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

11. In an emergency, could you contact the person(s) in charge of evacuating the building(s) in which you work and tell them where you were located?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

Getting Out

12. Can you move quickly in the event of an emergency?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

13. Do you find stairs difficult to use?

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

14. Are you a wheelchair user?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

The information you have given us will help us to meet any needs for information or assistance you may have.

Please return to: The Premises Manager

Appendix 4: Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan for:

Name _____
Department _____
Building _____
Floor _____
Room Number _____

Awareness of Procedure:

The disable person is informed of a fire evacuation by:

existing alarm system ☐
pager device ☐
visual alarm system ☐
other (please specify) ☐

Designated Assistance:

(The following people have been designated to give me assistance to get out of the building in an emergency).

Name _____
Contact details _____

Name _____
Contact details _____

Name _____
Contact details _____

Methods of Assistance:

(e.g.: Transfer procedures, methods of guidance, etc.)

Equipment Provided:

(including means of communication)

Evacuation Procedure:

(A step by step account beginning from the first alarm)

Safe Route(s):

