



EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Effective Date: January 2012
Reviewed:
Revised:

Issued By: Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety

Approved by: AODA Committee

Title: EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Policy Number:

Key Words: emergency response, disabilities

Stakeholders: Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety, Emergency Procedure Committee

Policy Statement:

This policy outlines the responsibility and process of identifying employees who require assistance in the event of an emergency situation and developing a plan to ensure that all employees are able to evacuate a hazardous environment.

It is an expectation that all staff involved in assisting employees with disabilities during an emergency response, do so in a safe manner. Staff must also ensure that the environment, equipment, and tools used during the emergency response are safe and in good working condition.

Definitions:

Employee requiring assistance: staff with a permanent or temporary disability that may affect their ability to evacuate the building safely during an emergency. Examples of conditions that may affect safe evacuations may include, but are not limited to; inability to climb/descend stairs, inability to hear emergency alarms and/or see signs, emergency equipment and evacuation directions.

Buddy: the staff member assigned during the planning stage, who will assist the employee requiring assistance during an evacuation.

Refuge zone: Refuge Zone refers to fire/smoke compartments in inpatient care unit floor areas (*non-ambulatory*). There are at least two *Refuge Zones* on each inpatient care floor. They are separated by fire-rated smoke barriers. Typically, the north and south sides of an inpatient floor area are separate *Refuge Zones*. These zones provide for horizontal evacuation from a zone under threat of smoke or fire to a safe zone. Access to an adjacent zone is through designated double-door or single-door doorways in main corridors. Ambulatory floor areas are not generally designed with separate *Refuge Zones*.

Standards and Regulations:

Occupational Health and Safety Act, Industrial Establishments
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Roles and Responsibilities:

Emergency Procedures Committee

- Ensure that Code policies/procedures incorporate general procedures and considerations for persons that require assistance to evacuate a hazardous environment in accordance with this policy.
- Include this procedure into the review of all general emergency response policies.



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Department Manager

- Ensure employees are trained and aware of the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.
- Be aware of employees with permanent disabilities and/or those who require temporary assistance to evacuate in the event of an emergency.
- Notify the Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety Department and other stakeholders as required, in order to develop and communicate individual emergency response plans.
- Discuss with the person that requires assistance to determine the level of assistance required to evacuate a floor area in the event of an emergency and determine the need to create individualized emergency response plans based on the procedure below to achieve the established emergency procedures for the unit and building.
- Assign a buddy to the employee requiring assistance.
- Review the individualized emergency response plan when an employee moves to a different location within the organization.
- For all locations other than 600 University Avenue, designate fire wardens and ensure that they are aware of persons that require assistance and what measures are needed for that person to evacuate the building safely in the event of an emergency.

Department Staff

- Participate in training on the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.
- Assist those with special needs.
- Follow procedures as required.
- If assigned to be a buddy, communicate to the staff member that requires assistance if you will be away and unable to provide assistance

Staff that Require Assistance

- Inform your supervisor or manager if you require assistance in the event of an emergency situation.
- Work with your supervisor or manager to determine an individualized plan that will achieve the results intended by the unit and building's established emergency procedures.
- Inform your supervisor or manager when your condition changes, requiring different, more or less assistance.
- During an emergency that requires an evacuation, communicate to staff members if additional assistance with evacuation is needed.
- Maintain communication with your buddy.

Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety

- During employee health reviews for new hires, identify permanent/temporary disabilities that may require special assistance during an evacuation.
- Review, update and communicate the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.
- As part of the return to work planning process, identify the specific functional limitation (i.e. inability to descend stairs) that would warrant an individualized emergency response plan.



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- During the return to work/permanent accommodation planning, have the manager identify how the emergency response measures for that individual will be applied within their department. In collaboration with the manager and employee, review any restrictions and how they would impact there the employee's ability to evacuate (i.e. inability to descend stairs).
- Document the employee's individualized emergency response plan in their disability management file. Using Appendix A.
- Review and update the individualized emergency response plan when the employee's overall accommodations needs or return to work plans change.

Procedure

If there is an immediate threat on the floor that requires evacuation, the buddy assigned to the person requiring assistance will assist in the evacuation as planned. In the event that the assigned buddy is not available during the time of the incident, the person requiring assistance will identify themselves to the evacuation team leader/designate or any staff member in the area so a buddy can be assigned and assist the employee.

1. Move horizontally on the same floor away from the danger, if possible. If located in a critical care or in-patient area, the employee requiring assistance will be assisted to the adjacent refuge zone.
2. If the employees are unable to move horizontally away from the danger, the employee requiring assistance including those in wheelchairs will be assisted to the closest exit stairs. The buddy will assist the employee, if able, up or down the stairs towards the building exit. If in the process of descending/ascending the exit stairs the person is unable to continue, or if the person is in a wheelchair, the buddy will stay on the landing or stop at the next landing and position the employee so that the pathway is not obstructed for others evacuating the floor.
 - a. Based on the building location, the buddy will;
 - At 600 University Avenue: call or have a team member call Switchboard/Locating to inform them of their status and location.
 - All other locations: have a team member notify the emergency responders of their status and location according to the established procedures for that building.
3. The buddy is to stay with the employee requiring assistance until the area has been cleared by the emergency responders in charge of the incident.

***DO NOT WAIT AT ELEVATOR LOBBIES:** Elevator use for persons requiring assistance is not permitted, unless authorized by the municipal emergency responders



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Appendix A: Individualized Emergency Response Plan Agreement

Name:

Date:

Position:

Department and Location:

Managers Name:

Restrictions:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety Department is aware of the need for accommodation regarding an individualized emergency response plan. All participants are in agreement that your permanent or temporary health condition can currently be accommodated within your position. Below is your individualized workplace emergency response plan as agreed upon on (insert date).

Please describe the individualized emergency response plan below and include details such as meeting location and name of the buddy if applicable

This individualized emergency response plan must be reviewed when;

- the employee moves to a different location or starts working on different shift in the organization
- the employee's overall accommodation needs are changed
- the employee or the department have an issue with the ability to accommodate
- Disability Case Coordinator determines that there is a need for review

The employee is to report to Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety if s/he moves or experiences any changes in his/hers permanent or temporary health condition so that the existing accommodation and the plan could be reassessed and modified as appropriate.

The employee consents that this information can be shared with anyone designated to provide assistance in an emergency.



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A copy of this agreement will be provided to all parties.

The signatures below reflect all participants involved in the approval of this accommodation and emergency response plan.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Manager Signature: _____ Date: _____

Buddy Signature (if applicable): _____ Date: _____

Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety: _____ Date: _____