

CANISIUS COLLEGE
GRIFF CENTER

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (SAS)

OLD MAIN 317 P: 716-888-2485 E:ACCESS@CANISIUS.EDU

Evacuation Plan for Individuals with Disabilities

Canisius College's policies and procedures require that everyone evacuates campus facilities any time the fire-alarm system is activated and/or upon notification by Public Safety and/or the emergency coordinator. These policies and procedures apply to both real emergencies and drills and must be followed by all members of the college community, including individuals with disabilities.

Evacuation Procedures for Individuals with Disabilities

Special considerations may need to be made in emergency situations for individuals with disabilities. How an individual with a disability responds to an emergency depends on the type of emergency, the specific disability, and the location of work, classes, or campus residence. Ultimately the individual with a disability is responsible for his or her own safety in emergency situations. It is wise for the individual to plan ahead for emergencies. Pre-planning includes developing an evacuation plan with the director of SAS and then discussing the specifics of the plan with members of the college community, including, but not limited to, supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents.

Responsibilities of Individuals with Disabilities: Pre-Emergency Preparation

In an emergency situation, it is critical to the health and safety of individuals with disabilities that they are familiar with their needs during an evacuation. Individuals are expected to convey these needs to the SAS Office, their supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents, within the first week of each semester. The following guidelines are general suggestions and not as an official plan of action. Individuals with disabilities should contact the SAS Office to arrange for an evacuation plan each semester. The safety of individuals with disabilities depends on their judgment and knowledge of general safety precautions.

1. Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the layout of buildings and the location of exits in every building in which they work, have class, or reside on campus.
2. Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the distinct emergency alarm system in each room and/or building (e.g. horn, strobe lights).
3. Individuals with disabilities should be familiar with the safest evacuation sites in each building (see suggestions below).
4. Whenever possible, individuals with disabilities should try to have designated persons or "evacuation assistants," such as supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents, assist them during the evacuation. Evacuation assistants can assist individuals with disabilities in evacuating the building or, as needed, help them reach and access a safe evacuation site (see suggestions below) before alerting emergency personnel of their location in the building and the nature of their disability.
5. Individuals with disabilities should tell their evacuation assistant about specific evacuation needs (e.g. use of a wheelchair or a respirator, breathing or mobility difficulty, or stamina difficulties.)
6. Individuals with disabilities should practice the procedures at the beginning of each semester.

Resident students with either permanent or temporary disabilities should make their room information and needs known to the SAS office, the hall director (HD) and the resident assistant (RA) assigned to their floor. Because HDs and RAs may not be in the building at all times, it is also recommended that, as needed, students make their needs known to one or more students residing on the same floor in their residence hall. Identifying needs of more than one individual will help to facilitate evacuation in the event of an emergency. In the event that none of these people are available during an evacuation, contact the Public Safety Office at 711 or (716) 888-2330 or contact another resident student for assistance. HDs, RAs, and other students can provide assistance by helping the individual reach the safest evacuation site and by then advising the emergency personnel where the individual is located in the building and the nature of the disability.

Resident students with disabilities must notify the SAS office as well as residence hall staff if they permanently move to another room.

It is recommended that a floor meeting be conducted by resident assistants during the early part of each semester to discuss disability concerns and to instruct everyone on emergency procedures. In addition, resident staff training will include notification of the location of individuals with disabilities in each building and procedures for assisting students.

Responsibilities of Individuals with Disabilities: Evacuation Procedures During an Emergency/Drill

Individuals who are able to negotiate stairs with no or minor assistance should do so when evacuation is required. Follow the pre-emergency preparation guidelines listed on the first page. If danger is imminent, we recommend that individuals with disabilities wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting egress. However, should individuals with mobility disabilities decide to proceed on their own, caution should be used in negotiating the stairwells.

Individuals who are not able to negotiate stairs should enlist the help of their evacuation assistants to reach and access a safe evacuation site (see suggestions below). They should note the location of the area they are in (e.g., north-west corner, 5th floor) to facilitate evacuation. Evacuation assistants will then alert emergency personnel of the individual's location and the nature of the disability.

If possible, individuals should also contact the Public Safety Office at 711 and (716) 888-2330 during an emergency in order to provide their name, location, and reason for calling. It is also important to indicate specific evacuation needs (e.g., use of a wheelchair or respirator, breathing or stamina difficulties) that should be considered for evacuation. Public Safety will notify emergency personnel of the individual's location. Phone lines normally remain in service during most building emergencies. If the phone lines fail, individuals can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object. Emergency personnel will then enter the building to evacuate individuals who require assistance.

Vertical (Stairway) Evacuation:

Stairways can be used by those who are able to evacuate with no or minor assistance. A stairway must be large enough for a person using a wheelchair to sit without obstructing the flow of traffic as people exit the building via the stairway. Obstructing the flow of traffic could place the individual with a disability and others in danger.

Individuals who are not able to use stairways:

Unless danger is imminent, remain in a room with an exterior window and a telephone, closing the door if possible. If you are able, proceed to a stairway that is not in immediate danger (example, exterior stairs in Old Main). As needed, individuals can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object or if possible, call Public Safety at (716) 888-2330 with your exact location.

Horizontal Evacuation:

Move away from the area of imminent danger to a safe distance (e.g., to another wing, the opposite end of the corridor, or the outside if on the ground level).

Information on Various Disabilities for Evacuation Assistants

Below is background information on various types of disabilities that supervisors, co-workers, faculty, fellow students, residence hall staff, and/or other residents should become familiar with if asked to be an evacuation assistant for individuals with disabilities.

If individuals have a mobility impairment and/or use a wheelchair, they will most likely require some type of assistance for evacuation. Elevators should not be used unless directed by emergency personnel. In most instances, it is not wise to attempt to carry the person in the wheelchair because most wheelchairs are not constructed for lifting and can be quite heavy (e.g., power wheelchairs can weigh in excess of 300 pounds). Evacuation of a person who uses a wheelchair is best left to emergency personnel with extensive training in evacuation procedures and the proper equipment.

Individuals with visual impairments should already be familiar with their surroundings after mobility and orientation training. However, if they are not aware of emergency exits, offer assistance to guide them to the nearest emergency exit. Provide assistance by using the sighted-guide technique of offering an elbow. While walking, alert individuals as to where they are and inform them of any obstacles, debris, doorways, or narrow passages. Once to safety, orient individuals to their surroundings and determine if further assistance is needed.

Individuals with hearing impairments may need to be alerted to emergency situations. Two options to obtain their attention are: write a note to alert them of the emergency and instruct them where to go, OR turn the light switch on and off to gain their attention.

Individuals who have seizure disorders should alert their supervisor(s), faculty, residence hall staff, and/or health services about their condition and their wishes for responding to their seizures. They should let others know what to expect if a seizure occurs during an emergency evacuation.

Contact Information:

Students: Student Accessibility Services (716) 888-2485
Residence Life, (716) 888-8300

Faculty and Staff: Human Resources, (716) 888-2240

Visitors: Public Safety, x711 or (716) 888-2330