

## **Technical Guidance**

### **Fire safety provisions for persons with disabilities V25.1**

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## 1. Summary Information

If you have a disability, ask for a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP). PEEPS ensure that everyone in our buildings can leave them safely if there is a fire.

For the benefit of individuals with disabilities, the University provides things such as:

- An app that allows users to contact security in an emergency (Safezone)
- A fire alarm text messaging system in some buildings
- Vibrating pillow alarms
- In some areas, beacons that illuminate when a fire alarm activates
- Areas (refuges) within buildings where an individual can remain safe from fire for up to 30 minutes
- In some buildings, lifts or special chairs that can be used to safely bring wheelchair users to the ground floor
- Trained staff to assist disabled persons in an emergency

**If you are unsure about how you can escape from any of our buildings, email [firesafety@gre.ac.uk](mailto:firesafety@gre.ac.uk) for advice and guidance.**

## 2. Introduction

In some instances, disabled individuals require additional facilities and support to ensure their safety in the event of fire. To identify what is precisely needed the University devises personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for disabled staff, students and visitors who attend the University more than 3 times per annum. If you fall into one of these categories but do not have a PEEP, you should make contact as indicated below:

Individual	Initial contact
Student	Student Academic Services
Staff	Line manager
Visitor	Point of contact in the University

Particular PEEP-related provisions and procedures in place across the University are outlined below.

## 3. Guidance

### 3.1 Provisions and procedures in place for wheelchair users and others with mobility issues

#### Refuges

Refuges are areas in buildings, typically staircase lobbies, where individuals can wait and be protected from fire and smoke until such time as they need to be evacuated (or can safely return to other areas within the building).<sup>1</sup> The physical protection of the refuge is designed to last at least 30 minutes. Should evacuation be necessary, it will occur well within this time.

In order to communicate with security staff, refuges are generally provided with some form of fixed communication. In some buildings, mounted intercom units are installed. Elsewhere, red telephone handsets may be found. To communicate using the intercom, simply press the button on it. Security will then respond through the speaker and a two-way conversation can commence. To communicate using the red telephone, lift the handset and it will automatically dial Security.

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<sup>1</sup> As disabled persons should not be evacuated unnecessarily, it will be uncommon for an individual to be evacuated from a refuge during a fire.

In addition to the above, there are some refuges that do not yet have fixed communications. In these locations, individuals will either need to use a mobile phone to contact security on their emergency numbers<sup>2</sup> or use the 'Safezone' app to do the same.<sup>3</sup> These refuges will be focussed upon during any evacuation should it not be possible to make contact from them (for example, where the occupant of the refuge doesn't have a phone).

### Automatic door openers

Disabled individuals should note that some automatic door openers may cease to function during a fire alarm where their continued operation is deemed to present a risk in terms of the spread of fire. Should this happen, other individuals will be able to assist (building fire wardens are instructed to offer assistance where necessary).



*Figure 1 – Refuge intercom*



*Figure 2 – Refuge telephone*

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<sup>2</sup> Emergency numbers are: Greenwich - 020 8331 7616; Avery Hill – 020 8331 9101; Medway - 020 8331 3138 (it may be necessary to enable WiFi calling in areas where phone signals are weak)

<sup>3</sup> For further details on the Safezone app, see section 8 below.



*Figure 3 – Refuge fire notice where mobile phone required (other similar notices may be found – the word ‘refuge’ will always appear)*

#### Evacuation procedures for individuals who cannot negotiate steps or stairs

Where an evacuation is necessary and an individual who cannot negotiate steps or stairs is required to leave the building, evacuation will normally be carried out by either an evacuation lift (specially designed to be operable in the event of fire) or an evacuation chair.

Stockwell Street and Daniel Defoe Halls of Residence are presently the only building that have evacuation lifts.<sup>4</sup> In an emergency, these lifts will automatically return to ground level where they will come under direct control of security guards.

Evacuation via evacuation chair is the method that will be employed in other buildings, with the exception of those few buildings that have upper floors that are inaccessible due to the absence of lifts.

Evacuation chairs are specially designed to transport individuals down or, in some cases, upstairs. They might also be used to transport persons horizontally if the need arises to do this (for example, where an individual cannot reach a refuge unaided).

Security guards are trained to use evacuation chairs but will not naturally be aware of an individual’s specific needs. They will, consequently, readily receive direction from those they might assist.

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<sup>4</sup> Note: The 2nd and 3rd floors of the stairs on the southernmost corner of the Stockwell Street building are not served by an evacuation lift.

### Evacuation procedures for individuals with other mobility issues

For individuals with mobility issues that do not prevent the use of stairs, the general approach is for the individual to slowly make their way out – following the main flow of people where that would result in safer movement. If an individual can go down or up stairs but with significant difficulty, it is acceptable to wait in a refuge and be guided by Security as to whether immediate evacuation is necessary.

The assistance of others may be helpful or necessary depending upon the level of impairment.



*Figure 4 – Evacuation chair*

## **3.2 Provisions and procedures in place for individuals with hearing impairments**

### Alarm text service

In buildings listed below, the University has installed a Hearing Fire Alert System (HFAS) which will, during a fire alarm, send an SMS text message to anyone registered on the system. Registration is achieved by simply texting the building name to the system operator's text telephone number. Once this has been done, text messages will be received each time the relevant alarm activates (please note that this will happen irrespective of whether the individual is in the building or not).

Full instructions regarding how to use the system can be found at the main entrances to the relevant buildings.

Campus	Building
Avery Hill	Fry
Avery Hill	Grey
Avery Hill	Library
Avery Hill	Seacole
Avery Hill	Bathway
Greenwich	Dreadnought
Greenwich	King William
Greenwich	Queen Mary
Greenwich	Stockwell Street
Medway	Nelson
Medway	Pembroke

Figure 5 – Buildings fitted with an alarm text message service



Figure 6 – Alarm text message service messages

### Visual alarm devices

To assist those with hearing impairments, and in places where an audible alarm may not be heard by those without an impairment, visual alarm devices are also installed in



some areas within the University. Typically, these can be found within toilets which are naturally areas where those with a hearing impairment may not be able to rely upon the actions of others to indicate that a fire alarm has sounded.



*Figure 6 – Visual alarm device*

### Vibrating alarms

For hearing impaired students that live in our accommodation, vibrating alarms will be provided. These alarms are designed to be placed under pillows and will vibrate when the fire alarm sounds.



*Figure 7 – Vibrating pillow alarm*

### Evacuation procedures for individuals with hearing impairments

Once an individual with a hearing impairment becomes aware of an alarm, assuming there is no other disability, evacuation should be straightforward. The key objective is to consequently ensure that the individual does know when the alarm has sounded. This may be achieved by exploiting the facilities highlighted above, or, alternatively, ensuring that other students or staff indicate the alarm, either directly or indirectly (through

collective movement). Naturally, individuals should avoid places where they might be isolated from others and no visual alarm is provided.

### **3.3 Provisions and procedures in place for individuals with visual impairments**

#### Signage

The main fire safety provision in place for those with visual impairments is the provision of highly legible signage.

#### Evacuation procedures for individuals with visual impairments

Individuals with visual impairments may be able to navigate their way slowly around buildings, in which case the guidance in respect of escape is much the same as for individuals with mobility impairments. For those with significant impairments, the assistance of others may be necessary. This help may either be pre-arranged or more ad hoc (asking the assistance of staff fellow students for example).

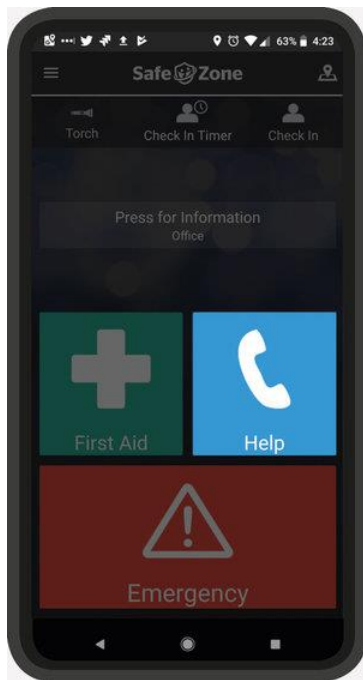
### **3.4 Provisions and procedures in place for individuals with other impairments**

Individuals within the University may have other impairments that may affect their ability to respond effectively during a fire alarm. For example, the sound of the fire alarm may be disorienting or cause panic. The procedures necessary for the safety of Individuals in this bracket are varied and will need to be discussed during the PEEP interview.

### **3.5 Safezone**

The University uses the '[Safezone](#)' app to further enhance the safety of its staff and students. It is strongly recommended that both staff and students download the app and register with the service. One of the apps most valuable features is its ability to enable direct emergency communication with Security via voice or text.

Some Safezone users may also be issued with a wearable Safezone device. This is a button, normally worn on the wrist or around the neck, that the user can operate to raise an alert. If for some reason the user isn't capable of operating the device, others can do so by pressing it until it glows red.



*Figure 8 – Safezone app*



*Figure 9 – Safezone wearable device*

### **3.6 General assistance for disabled individuals**

Disabled individuals should receive support from all University staff in the event of fire. Particular assistance will be provided by fire wardens, lecturers and security staff.

### **3.7 Residential accommodation**

Where a student with a PEEP resides in our accommodation<sup>5</sup>, accommodation managers will be made aware that the individual has a PEEP. Students residing in other

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<sup>5</sup> Accommodation on the Medway and Avery Hill campuses. Defoe, Devonport and Cutty at Greenwich.

accommodation should raise the issue of their particular needs with the managers of that accommodation.

### **3.8 Non-residential buildings with notable egress issues**

Some parts of older buildings on the Greenwich campus are accessible but have egress issues – notably, the upper floors of the southern wing of Queen Mary and the western end of the ground floor of Devonport C&D block. Please email [firesafety@gre.ac.uk](mailto:firesafety@gre.ac.uk) if you cannot use steps or stairs but wish to access these spaces.

### **3.9 Further information and building familiarisation**

If you wish to discuss anything about what to do when the fire alarm sounds or require a familiarisation of the buildings you may use, please contact your line manager or personal tutor, or email [firesafety@gre.ac.uk](mailto:firesafety@gre.ac.uk).

## **4. Document history**

<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>	<b>Summary of Review</b>
17-Jul-25	Enda Rooney	First revision in new format (V.25.1)