

## **Attachment 5: Considerations for Persons Requiring Special Assistance**

This attachment outlines additional considerations for persons requiring special assistance during emergencies.

### **General**

To overcome barriers as described in the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Section 427, South Plains College has identified several college departments and programs with resources that can be accessed prior to and during an emergency to aid those on campus who may require special assistance. Those requiring special assistance may include the following:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Elderly individuals
- Individuals under the age of 18
- Individuals from diverse cultures
- Individuals who have limited English proficiency or are non-English speaking
- Individuals who lack reliable transportation

The college ensures notifications are made more accessible for persons requiring special assistance.

- Text messages and emails sent via the emergency notification system allow the college to communicate effectively with individuals who may be deaf or hard of hearing.
- Door-to-door contact will be utilized when appropriate to communicate with individuals who may have language barriers.
- Emergency responders carry visual translators to aid in communication or can utilize language translators.
- During an evacuation of campus, persons requiring transportation assistance may contact the following for transportation assistance.
  - Residence hall students – residence hall staff
  - Levelland campus – Dean of Students
  - Lubbock, Reese, and Plainview centers – center dean or center directors

### **Disability Services**

Disability Services offers students accommodations, disability-related information, adapted technology services, sign language interpreting, and transcription services for academically related purposes. This is a voluntary program as students have the option to utilize Disability Services resources but are not required to contact or report to the department.

- Pre-emergency education – Each student, as part of their intake appointment upon registering with Disability Services, receives a copy of the Emergency Information Guide (or is directed to an online resource) as well as guidance on how to access special assistance during an emergency.
- Emergency Response – During an emergency, Disability Services can be accessed by calling 806-716-2526.

### **Sheltering**

The college will provide reasonable accommodation for people requiring special assistance during a sheltering operation.

- All college facilities are accessible to persons with physical disabilities and meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. College shelters will also comply with FEMA's guidance on Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters.
- Should the college need to provide a temporary shelter, persons requiring special assistance may request the following accommodations:
  - Service animals will be allowed to accompany their owners into facilities. Owners should come prepared to care for their animals for the duration of the sheltering operation.
  - Persons requiring refrigeration for their medications may contact shelter management, who will assist by either providing access to a refrigerator or another means to cool their medications such as a cooler with ice.
  - Individuals who require electricity to power or charge their medically necessary equipment may notify shelter management, who will provide them access to electrical outlets within the facility.
  - Other accommodations not listed here should be requested through shelter management.

### **Evacuation Information for Persons with Disabilities**

All South Plains College students and employees are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the emergency information regarding their work areas, classrooms, and/or living areas. This includes emergency evacuation plans that include exits, alternate routes of egress, the location of fire alarm pull stations, portable fire extinguishers and respective assembly areas.

### **Personal Evacuation Plans**

This information provides a general guideline of evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities for fire and other building emergencies. Individuals must develop their own facility evacuation plans and identify their primary and secondary evacuation routes from each building they use.

Emergency Evacuation Plans Should Include

- Being familiar with evacuation options
- Seeking evacuation assistants who are willing to assist in case of an emergency
- Asking supervisors, instructors, or disability support services (DSS) about evacuation plans for buildings.

SPC buildings have accessible exits at the ground level floor which can be used during an emergency. However, in some SPC buildings people will need to use stairways to reach building exits. Elevators cannot be used because they have been shown to be unsafe to use in an emergency.

### **Evacuation Options**

- Persons without disabilities must evacuate to the nearest exit. People with disabilities have four basic evacuation options:
- Horizontal evacuation: using building exits to the outside ground level or going into unaffected wings of multi-building complexes.
- Stairway evacuation: using steps to reach ground level exits from the building.
- Stay in Place: unless danger is imminent, remaining in a room with an exterior window, a telephone, and a solid or fire-resistant door. With this approach, the individual may keep in contact with emergency services by dialing 911 and reporting location directly. Emergency services will immediately relay this location to on-site emergency personnel, who will determine the necessity for evacuation. Phone lines are expected to remain in service during most building emergencies. If the phone lines fail, the individual can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

For false or needless alarms or an isolated and contained fire, a person with a disability may not have to evacuate. The decision to evacuate will be made by the local fire department. The local fire department will tell the individual their decision or relay the information via the SPC police.

### **Disability Guidelines**

Prior planning and practicing of emergency evacuation routes are important in assuring a safe evacuation.

#### **Mobility Impaired: Wheelchair**

People using wheelchairs should stay in place or move to an area of refuge with their assistant when the alarm sounds. The evacuation assistant should then proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the building and tell the fire department or SPC police the location of the person with a disability. If the person with a disability is alone, they should phone emergency services at 911 with their present location and the area of refuge they are headed.

Stairway evacuation of wheelchair users should be conducted by trained professionals. Only in situations of extreme danger should untrained people attempt to evacuate wheelchair users. Moving a wheelchair downstairs is never safe.

#### **Mobility Impaired: Non-Wheelchair**

Persons with mobility impairments, who are able to walk independently, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. If danger is imminent, the individual should wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. If there is no immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire, or unusual odor), the person with a disability may choose to stay in the building, using the other options, until the emergency personnel arrive and determine if evacuation is necessary.

#### **Hearing Impaired**

Some buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights; however, many are not. Persons with hearing impairments may not hear audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Emergency instructions can be given by writing a short explicit note to evacuate.

Reasonable accommodations for persons with hearing impairments may be met by modifying the building fire alarm system, particularly for occupants who spend most of their day in one location. Persons needing such accommodations should contact DSS (see below for contact information).

### **Visually Impaired**

Most people with a visual impairment will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route is likely different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating. The assistant should offer their elbow to the individual with a visual impairment and guide him or her through the evacuation route. During the evacuation the assistant should communicate as necessary to assure safe evacuation.

Students requiring assistance are encouraged to contact the office of disability support services at 806-716-2529 to develop a personal evacuation plan.

Employees requiring assistance should contact SPC's Emergency Operations Manager at 806-716-2246 to develop a personal evacuation plan.

*If you have additional questions, contact SPC's Emergency Operations Manager at 806-716-2246.*

### **Guidelines for Assisting Disabled Occupants**

The following general guidelines have been adopted by the SPC to help evacuate individuals with disabilities. However, these guidelines may not apply in every circumstance due to specific individual needs. It is important to remember that evacuation is difficult and uncomfortable for both the rescuers and the people being assisted. Some people have conditions that can be aggravated or triggered if they are moved incorrectly. It is also important to know that environmental conditions (smoke, debris, loss of electricity) will complicate evacuation efforts. Before attempting to evacuate a person with a disability consider your options and the risk of injury to yourself and others. Do not make an emergency situation worse.

- Occupants should be invited to volunteer ahead of time to assist persons with disabilities in an emergency. If a volunteer is not available, identify someone to assist who is willing to accept the responsibility.
- Two or more trained volunteers, if available, should conduct the evacuation.
- **DO NOT** evacuate persons in their wheelchairs. This is standard practice to ensure the safety of persons with disabilities and volunteers. Wheelchairs will be evacuated later if possible.
- Always **ASK** someone with a disability how you can help **BEFORE** attempting any rescue technique or giving assistance. Ask how they can best be assisted or moved, and whether there are any special considerations or items that need to come with them.
- Before attempting an evacuation, volunteers and the people being assisted should discuss how any lifting will be done and where they are going.
- Proper lifting techniques should be used to avoid injury to rescuers' backs (e.g. bending the knees, keeping the back straight, holding the person close before lifting, and using leg muscles to lift). Ask permission of the evacuee if an evacuation chair or similar device is

being considered as an aid in an evacuation. When using such devices, make sure the person is secured properly. Be careful on stairs and rest at landings if necessary. Certain lifts may need to be modified depending on the person's disabilities.

- **DO NOT** use elevators, unless authorized to do so by police or fire personnel. Elevators could fail during a fire.
- If the situation is life threatening, call 911.
- Check on people with disabilities during an evacuation. A "buddy system", where persons with disabilities pre-identify volunteers (co-workers/roommates) to alert them and assist them in an emergency, is a good method.
- Attempt a rescue evacuation **ONLY** if you have had rescue training or the person is in immediate danger and cannot wait for professional assistance. (Campus Police / Local Fire Department are trained in rescue procedures).

### **Blindness or Visual Impairment**

Give verbal instructions to advise about the safest route or direction using compass directions, estimated distances, and directional terms.

- **DO NOT** grasp a visually impaired person's arm. Ask if he or she would like to hold onto your arm as you exit, especially if there is debris or a crowd.
- Give other verbal instructions or information (i.e. elevators cannot be used).

### **Deafness or Hearing Impairment**

Get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment by touch and eye contact. Clearly state the problem. Gestures and pointing are helpful, but be prepared to write a brief statement if the person does not seem to understand.

- Offer visual instructions to advise of safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.

### **Mobility Impairment**

It may be necessary to help clear the exit route of debris (if possible) so that the person with a disability can move out or to a safer area.

- If people with mobility impairments cannot exit, they should move to a safer area, e.g., most enclosed stairwells, an office with the door shut which is a good distance from the hazard
- If you do not know the safe areas in your building, call the Emergency Management Coordinator at 806-716-2246.
- Notify campus police or emergency responders immediately about any people remaining in the building and their locations.
- Police or fire personnel will decide whether people are safe where they are and will evacuate them as necessary. The responding Fire Department may determine that it is safe to override the rule against using elevators.
- If people are in immediate danger and cannot be moved to a safe area to wait for assistance, it may be necessary to evacuate them using an alternative means.

**Additional Services**

- Human Resources provides staff with information on understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and works with departments on reasonable accommodations for employees, to include building access.