General

This brochure provides a general guideline of evacuation procedures for fire and other building emergencies. Faculty, staff, students and visitors must identify their primary and secondary evacuation routes from each building they use.

Most EWU buildings have accessible exits at the ground level floor which can be used during an emergency. However, in some EWU 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 and in some buildings they are automatically recalled to the ground floor.

Evacuation Options

Persons without disabilities must evacuate using the nearest exit. Persons with disabilities have four basic evacuation options.

1. **Horizontal.** Use building exits to reach the outside ground level.

2. **Stairway.** Use steps to reach ground level exits from the building.

3. **Area of Refuge.** With an evacuation assistant, go to an area of refuge away from obvious danger. The evacuation assistant will then go to the building evacuation assembly point and notify the on site emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability. Emergency personnel will determine if further evacuation is necessary.

Areas of Refuge are identified with signs in many EWU buildings. Usually these areas will have emergency call stations. Other safe areas of refuge are pressurized stair enclosures common to high-rise buildings, and open air exit balconies. Other possible areas of refuge include: fire-rated corridors or vestibules adjacent to exit stairs, and pressurized elevator lobbies. Many campus buildings feature fire rated corridor construction that may offer safe refuge. Taking a position in a rated corridor next to the stair is a good alternative to a small stair landing crowded with the other building occupants using the stairway. For assistance in identifying areas of refuge, call Environmental Health and Safety, at 6496.

4. **Stay in Place.** Unless danger is imminent, remain in a room with an exterior window, a telephone, or cell phone and a solid or fire resistant door. With this approach, the person may keep in contact with emergency services by dialing 911 and reporting his or her 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.

The Stay in Place approach may be more appropriate for sprinkler protected buildings or buildings where an "area of refuge” is not nearby or available. It may also be more appropriate for an occupant who is alone when the alarm sounds. A “solid" or fire resistant door can be identified by a fire label on the jam and frame. Non-labeled 1-3/4 inch thick solid core wood doors hung on a metal frame also offer good fire resistance.

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

Disability Guidelines

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

Wheelchair Users — Persons using wheelchairs should move to an Area of Refuge with their assistants when the alarm sounds. The evacuation assistant should then proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the
building and tell the fire or police department the location of the person with a disability. If the person with a disability is alone or chooses to Stay in Place, he/she should phone emergency services at 911 with his/her present location.

If the stair landing is chosen as the area of refuge, please note that many campus buildings have relatively small stair landings, and wheelchair users are advised to wait until the heavy traffic has passed before entering the stairway.

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 down stairs is never safe.

Mobility Needs - Non Wheelchair
Persons with mobility needs, 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.

**Prior planning is the key to a safe evacuation.**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Some buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights; however, some are not. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing 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.

Blind or Low Vision
Most people who are blind or low vision may 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 his or her elbow to the individual with a visual disability and guide him or her through the evacuation route. During the evacuation the assistant should communicate as necessary to assure safe evacuation.

This brochure is designed to complement the University Emergency Plan and to provide general information and promote planning. If you have any questions call the Environmental, Health & Safety Department, 6496.

This brochure can be made available in alternate formats for persons with disabilities. Please contact Environmental Health and Safety with any requests at least 10 working days in advance.