

# Evacuation for Persons with Disabilities

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## Evacuation Information

All Indiana Tech students, faculty, staff and administrators are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the emergency information regarding their work areas, classrooms, and/or living areas. This includes emergency evacuation plans comprising: exits, alternate routes of egress, the location of fire alarm pull stations, portable fire extinguishers and respective rally area.

### Personal Evacuation Plans

This information provides a general guideline of evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities for fire and other building emergencies. Faculty, staff, students, and visitors must develop their own facilities 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 security about evacuation plans for buildings
- Program emergency contacts: Emergency services 911, Security 260-399-2805

Most Indiana Tech buildings have accessible exits at the ground level floor which can be used during an emergency. However, in most Indiana Tech 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 to the nearest exit. Persons with disabilities have four basic evacuation options:

1. Horizontal evacuation: using building exits to the outside ground level or going into unaffected wings of multi-building complexes.
2. Stairway evacuation: using steps to reach ground level exits from the building.
3. 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 person may keep in contact with emergency services by dialing 911 and then Indiana Tech security at 260-399-2805 and reporting his or her location directly. Security 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 ¾ inch thick solid core wood doors hung on a metal frame also offer good fire resistance.*

4. Area of refuge: with an evacuation assistant, going 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. Usually, the safest areas of refuge are landings

in fire rated stairways. Other possible areas of refuge include: fire rated corridors or vestibules adjacent to exit stairs. 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 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 Fort Wayne Fire department. The Fort Wayne fire department will tell the individual their decision or relay the information via campus security.

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## Disability Guidelines

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

### Mobility Impaired Wheelchair

Persons 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 Fort Wayne Fire department or campus security the location of the person with a disability. If the person with a disability is alone, he/she should phone emergency services at 911 with their present location and the area of refuge they are headed.

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 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

All buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights.

## 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 disability coordinator to develop a personal evacuation plan. [disabilitycoordinator@indianatech.edu](mailto:disabilitycoordinator@indianatech.edu)

Employees requiring assistance should contact human relations to develop a personal evacuation plan.

If you have additional questions, contact the Director of Security & Facilities Operations.  
[facilities@indianatech.edu](mailto:facilities@indianatech.edu)

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## Guidelines for Persons Assisting Disabled Occupants

The following general guidelines have been adopted by the University 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 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).
  - Do not use elevators, unless authorized to do so by fire personnel. Elevators could fail during a fire.
  - If the situation is life threatening, call 911 or campus security 260-399-2805.
  - 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. (The Local Fire Department is trained in rescue procedures).
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## 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
- Notify emergency responders or campus security immediately about any people remaining in the building and their locations.
- 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.