

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

Emergency Evacuation Guidelines For Persons With Disabilities



- ◆ Tips for establishing an evacuation plan.
- ◆ Tips for the person with a disability in preparing for and responding in an evacuation.
- ◆ Tips for assisting persons with disabilities in an evacuation.

This document is available in alternate formats by calling
360.438.3168 (voice) or 360.438.3167 (TTY).

Emergency Evacuation Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities, [January, 2002]

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The content of this document is for educational purposes only.
It is not intended to be legal or medical advice.

Developing A Plan For An Evacuation

Knowledge and preparation by both persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities is essential to reducing the impact of emergency disasters. When developing a plan the safety needs of persons with disabilities should be determined on a case-by-case basis because they vary with each individual and location. **Persons with disabilities are encouraged to take responsibility in developing their own personal emergency evacuation plan and sharing it with key persons.**

Note About Confidentiality

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), federal disability discrimination laws do not prevent employers from obtaining and appropriately using information necessary for a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan. However, employers should follow the EEOC guidelines for obtaining and using this information. See Appendix E for the EEOC “Fact Sheet on Obtaining and Using Employee Medical Information as Part of Emergency Evacuation Procedures.”

Tips For Developing A Plan

- Make 2 plans – 1) when in the company of others and 2) when alone.
- Find out if your local fire or emergency management office keeps a register of persons with disabilities.
- Ask others for input, for example, co-workers, neighbors, and building managers.
- Ask building managers about areas of refuge and if evacuation equipment is available.
- Choose 2 evacuation routes for each building (see “Evacuation Options” page 3).
- Set up a buddy system (see “Buddy System” page 3).
- Do not consider using elevators in an evacuation.
- Find out where accessible alternate shelter is located.
- Consider alternative carry and/or communication methods if necessary.
- Have a list of all your medications (name, dose, frequency, and name of doctor).
- Attach written instructions to all disability-related equipment.

- Think about your needs for disaster supplies kits, such as disability-related equipment, communication devices, service animal food, and 3 days worth of medication.
- Consider using door/window markers so emergency personnel will know your location.
- Adopt the rule to contact building security when in office buildings after hours.
- Have easy access to emergency contact information at all times (See page 10).
- If you use a personal care attendant through an agency, check to see if the agency would provide services through another location if an evacuation were ordered.
- Share plan(s) with your local fire department and key persons who regularly work or live in the building such as supervisors, building security, landlords, and neighbors.
- Participate in drills and review effectiveness of plan.

Buddy System

For a buddy system to be effective:

- The person with a disability and a buddy must be able to contact each other quickly.
- At least 2 buddies should be assigned.
- The person with a disability should train buddies when a plan is completed.
- The buddies need to be willing and capable of assisting in an evacuation.

Evacuation Options

Horizontal Evacuation: Use building exits to the outside ground level or exits that go into unaffected wings of multi-building complexes.

Stairway Evacuation: Use stairs to reach ground level exits.

Area of Refuge: Usually the safest area of refuge is an enclosed stairwell. Vestibules adjacent to exit stairs and open air exit balconies are also potential locations. Go to an area of refuge with a “buddy,” if possible, away from obvious danger.

Stay in Place: (In sprinkler protected buildings only or if an area of refuge is not available.) Unless danger is imminent, remain in a room with an exterior window, a telephone, and a solid or fire resistant door.

Tips For Persons With Disabilities

General Guidelines – During An Emergency

- Request to be assigned to apartments, office, class, and event locations in most accessible locations, if possible.
- Prepare disaster supplies kit ahead of time (See appendix D).
- Follow basic emergency safety guidelines (See appendices B and C).
- Call emergency personnel, if possible.
- Determine need to evacuate or stay in place.
- If evacuating, inform emergency personnel of area headed to and type of assistance needed.
- If unable to contact emergency personnel, move to planned designated area.
- Ask others to notify emergency personnel of need for assistance.
- If trapped, get the attention of others by calling out or making noise with objects.
- If not in immediate danger, stay in place or move to area of refuge until emergency personnel determine nature of the situation.
- A person with a disability may not have to evacuate for false alarms or isolated and contained fires.

The following are suggestions for specific disabilities in addition to general guidelines above:

Tips For Persons Who Use Wheelchairs

- Preparedness kits should include:
 - ✓ Heavy gloves for making your way over glass or debris.
 - ✓ Extra battery for electric wheelchairs.
 - ✓ Patch kit for punctured wheels.
- Store a lightweight manual wheelchair, if available.
- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to provide barrier free paths of travel.
- In earthquakes, once in a safe and protected place, lock wheels, bend over your knees and cover your head.
- If a small stair landing is chosen as the area of refuge, consider waiting until heavy people traffic has passed before entering.
- If you are in bed or out of your wheelchair, seek cover under the bed, a desk or table.

Tips For Deaf Or Hard Of Hearing Individuals

- Preparedness kits should include:
 - ✓ Pen and paper and a flashlight to communicate in the dark.
 - ✓ Extra hearing aid batteries.
 - ✓ Batteries for TTY and light phone signaler.

- Install both audible and visual smoke alarms in your office and home.
- Be careful of falling things as you leave your home or building.
- Inform neighbors ahead of time of your communication needs during an emergency.

Tips For Persons Who Are Blind Or Have Low Vision

- When preparing your evacuation plan, ask for needed information in alternate formats if needed, such as building evacuation instructions.
- Know where the nearest telephones and alarm boxes are located.
- Know how to describe your location.
- Disaster supplies kit should include:
 - ✓ Extra folding white cane.
 - ✓ Heavy gloves for feeling your way over glass or debris.
 - ✓ Colored cape or poncho worn for visibility by others.
- Know where nearby emergency medical kits are located.
- Mark emergency supplies with large print or Braille, if helpful.
- Practice your evacuation route periodically both with your service animal and white cane.
- Make sure evacuation signage is adequately marked for your needs.
- Be cautious of obstructions and falling objects during an earthquake.

Tips For Persons With A Service Dog

- Include instructions in your plan for service animals.
- Some dogs fear metal grated steps. If your evacuation route has these kinds of steps, get your dog accustomed to the route.
- If the only stair rail is on your left side where a guide dog should typically be, accustom the dog to heeling down the right side if you do not intend to work the dog on the steps.
- Be cautioned that if a dog typically stops at each new flight others behind you may panic. Heeling the dog may be safer in some instances.

Tips for Persons With Learning Differences

- When you make your plan for an evacuation,
 - ✓ Ask for information in alternate formats if needed.
 - ✓ Review general building evacuation guidelines and ask questions if you do not understand something.
- See if your evacuation routes have signage that is easy to follow.
- Ask someone to guide you during an evacuation if you feel you need help.
- Ask someone to write down information if you have a hard time understanding oral directions.
- Practice your evacuation route(s) regularly, such as every 2 weeks.

Tips For Persons With Limited Communication

- Determine how you will best communicate with others during an emergency.
- Consider having evacuation and emergency instructions written down on a card, carried at all times, and placed in an easy to view location.
- Have batteries or chargers for communication equipment in preparedness kit.

Tips For Persons With Psychological Disabilities

- Preparedness kit should include at least 3 days worth of needed medication.
- When developing plan, consider strategies to reduce stress of the emergency by,
 - ✓ Identifying areas of rescue that have two-way communications devices.
 - ✓ Making sure directional signage for exits and designated areas of refuge in your planned evacuation route is adequate enough to assist you.

Tips For Persons With Developmental Disabilities

- When you plan for an evacuation,
 - ✓ Review general building evacuation guidelines and ask questions if you do not understand something.
 - ✓ Request evacuation and emergency information in alternate formats if needed.
- Make sure that your evacuation routes have signage that is easy to follow.
- Ask someone to guide you during an evacuation if you feel you need help.
- Practice your evacuation route(s) regularly, such as every 2 weeks.

Tips For Persons With Medical Conditions

- Medical conditions include, for example, pregnancy, respiratory or cardiac problems.
- Ask for assistance walking down stairs.
- Find ways to reduce stress, exertion, and exposure to dust or smoke.
- Remember to bring medication or inhalers when evacuating.
- Consider taking rest periods during evacuation if possible.

Assisting Persons With Disabilities In An Evacuation

General Guidelines

- Assign office, class, and event locations, if possible, in most accessible locations.
- Ensure egress routes and areas of refuge are always clear and properly marked.
- Participate in and help identify gaps in evacuation plans during practice drills.
- Respect that the person with the disability may be the best authority on how to be evacuated.
- Provide adequate notice that a potential danger exists and that evacuation should begin.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Carrying a person is not advisable except in the most extreme of circumstances.
- Be aware that a service animal's sense of direction may become confused during an emergency.
- Do not abandon the person after exiting a building. Lead to a safe place with others.

The following are some suggestions that may provide additional assistance for specific disabilities:

Assisting Persons Who Use Wheelchairs

- Be familiar with designated areas of refuge and location of evacuation equipment for wheelchair users.
- If the person is unable to speak clearly, look for a sign on the chair with printed instructions.
- Only in situations of extreme danger should untrained people attempt to carry a person in a wheelchair.
- Prior to moving the person, check for life-support equipment.
- Be aware that wheelchairs have parts not designed to handle the stress of lifting.
- If you and/or others cannot safely carry a person up/down stairs, don't. Instead,
 - ✓ Position the person in the safest place possible according to the emergency.
 - ✓ Alert emergency personnel of person's location.

Assisting Persons With Mobility Limitations – Non Wheelchair Users

- Do not interfere with person's movement.
- Clear displaced and fallen obstacles from egress routes.
- If the stairs are crowded, you may act as a buffer.

Assisting Persons With Limited Communication

- Look for an instruction card on the person.

- During an evacuation, give clear instructions.
- Maintain eye contact with the individual to insure all directions are heard and understood.

Assisting Deaf Or Hard Of Hearing Persons

- Provide the person with a flashlight for their preparedness kit so they can signal their location and to help with lip reading in the dark.
- Get attention of the person before speaking and look at them when speaking.
- Use facial expressions and hand gestures to communicate.
- Speak using short sentences.
- Use written notes to indicate emergency and instructions, for example, “Fire! Go out rear door now!”
- Check to make sure you are understood.
- Be patient, the person may have difficulty understanding the urgency of your message.
- Be aware that the person may not be able to hear oral commands issued by authorities.
- When out of danger, offer to make phone calls if a TTY is not available.

Assisting Persons Who Are Blind Or Have Low Vision

- In the planning phase,
 - ✓ Offer emergency information in an accessible format.
 - ✓ Provide orientation to building evacuation routes and pull alarm locations.
- During an emergency, announce your presence when entering the person’s area.
- Offer your elbow, do not grab their arm or hand.
- Communicate through the evacuation by describing in advance physical barriers or action to be taken such as “Take two steps down.”

Assisting Persons With Psychological Disabilities

- Make sure exits and safe areas are clearly marked prior to an emergency.
- Understand that the person may have difficulties in concentrating, handling stress, and initiating personal contact.
- Help reduce stress during an emergency by
 - ✓ Offering to escort the person through the evacuation.
 - ✓ Giving clear and simple instructions.

Assisting Persons With Learning Differences

- During the planning phase,
 - ✓ Offer to provide information in alternate formats.
 - ✓ Provide adequate signage with simple symbols and review with them for understanding.

- When developing printed emergency materials, review to insure easy “readability.”
- During an evacuation, be patient giving instructions slowly and clearly.
- Offer to accompany them as their sense of direction may be limited.
- Encourage the person to practice their evacuation route(s) regularly.

Assisting Persons Who Are Developmentally Disabled

- Be aware that they may be unable to understand the emergency and could become disoriented or confused about the proper way to react.
- During an evacuation, give instructions slowly and clearly.
- Prior to an emergency, make sure designated emergency routes are marked with signage that communicates with color and symbols in addition to words.
- Encourage and assist the person in practicing their evacuation route(s) regularly.

Assisting Persons With Medical Conditions

- Medical conditions include, for example, pregnancy, respiratory or cardiac problems.
- Offer assistance walking down stairs.
- Find ways to reduce stress, exertion, and exposure to dust or smoke.
- Remind person to bring medication or inhalers.
- Allow rest periods during evacuation if possible.

Assisting Owners Of Service Animals

- Do not pet or offer food or water without the permission of the owner.
- Plan for the service animal to be evacuated with the owner.
- In the event that you are asked to handle the service animal while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness if present.

Resource Contact Information

American Red Cross	Local address:	(866) 438-4636 (voice) (800) 526-1417 (TTY) www.redcross.org
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	500 C Street SW Washington, DC 20472	(202) 646-4600 www.fema.gov
Local Emergency		Dial 911 (voice/TTY)
Local Police Department	Address:	Phone:
Local Fire Department	Address:	Phone:
Washington State Emergency Management Division	Bldg. 20, M/S TA-20 Camp Murray, WA 98430-5122	(253) 512-7002 www.wa.gov/wsem
Resources for Evacuation Equipment	Job Accommodation Network	1-800-526-7234 (voice/TTY) www.jan.wvu.edu/soar/index.html
Other:		

*Fill in local resource information in the spaces provided above to have close at hand.

APPENDIX A

EVACUATION PLAN

Personal Information:

Name: _____

Office Plan

Home/Other Plan

Office Location: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Supervisor: _____

Office Phone: _____

Supervisor Ph#: _____

Cell phone: _____

Emergency contact person: _____ Phone # _____

Type of disability(ies): (Optional)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility - non-wheelchair | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication/ Speech Limitation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility - Electric wheelchair user | <input type="checkbox"/> Blind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility - Manual wheelchair user | <input type="checkbox"/> Low Vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf/Hard of Hearing – sign language | <input type="checkbox"/> Color Blind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf/Hard of Hearing – oral | <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difference | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service Animal User | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Limitations and information emergency personnel should be aware of (including medication):

Plan: (prepare one plan for each building you regularly occupy)

Building: _____ **Time of Day Generally in Building/Home:** _____

Days Generally In Building/Home: Sun M T W R F Sat

Date Plan Completed: _____

Effective Dates: _____ **through** _____

Key Personnel To Contact For Assistance in Developing Your Evacuation Plan(s):

Name:	Title:	Phone:

Designated Buddies

Buddy #1 Name: _____

Address/Office: _____ **Ph#:** _____

Buddy #2 Name: _____

Address/Office: _____ **Ph#:** _____

Evacuation Routes (include final meeting place)

ROUTE #1:

ROUTE #2 (If route #1 becomes non-accessible during emergency):

Assistance Instructions (Such as medical, equipment, communication and carry instructions):

Plan For When You Are Not In the Company Of Others:

Disability Related Items To Put in Disaster Supplies Kit (See “Tips” page 4):

- 1) _____ 3) _____
2) _____ 4) _____

Emergency Items To Keep On Person At All Times:

- 1) _____ 3) _____
2) _____ 4) _____

Individuals and Offices Who Will Receive A Copy Of This Plan:

- Name: _____ Title: _____
 Name: _____ Title: _____
 Name: _____ Title: _____
 Name: _____ Title: _____

APPENDIX B

Preparing For Household Fires

- Make sure your house number is clearly visible and fire trucks can reach your home.
- Install smoke detectors outside all sleeping areas or in each bedroom and on every level of your home, including the basement.
- Check smoke detectors on a regular basis and replace the batteries twice yearly.
- Consider installing a residential sprinkler system.
- Know the location of all exits. If you live in an apartment, count the number of doorways between your apartment and the two nearest exits. Be familiar with all exits, including the windows.
- Plan your escape. Know two ways out of every room in case smoke or flames block your primary exit.
- Choose a meeting place outside the home, and be sure all family members are accounted for. If someone is missing let the fire department know.
- Do not go back inside.
- Practice your plan with all family members.
- Escape plans and exit drills will help ensure that you can get out quickly when there is no time for mistakes.
- Sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- Keep folding/chain style ladders stored in each upstairs bedroom.
- Mark bedroom windows outside of the building of children or others who may not be able to self-rescue.
- Learn how to turn off gas and electricity in an emergency.
- Install A-B-C type fire extinguishers; teach family members how to use them.

If There Is A Fire

- Leave your house or building and call 9-1-1 from a neighbor.
- Never use water on an electrical fire.
- If caught in smoke — drop to your hands and knees and crawl; breathe shallowly through your nose and use your blouse, shirt or jacket as a filter.
- If you are forced to advance through flames, hold your breath, move quickly, cover your head and hair, keep your head down and close your eyes as much as possible.
- Smother oil and grease fires in the kitchen with baking soda or salt, or put a lid over the flame if it is burning in a pan.
- If your clothes catch fire, “Stop, Drop and Roll” until the fire is out.
- If you are in a room and cannot escape, leave the door closed, stay low to the floor, and hang a white or light-colored sheet outside the window.

APPENDIX C

What To Do During An Earthquake

DROP - Drop down on the floor.

COVER - Take cover under a sturdy desk, table or piece of furniture. If this is not possible, take cover against an interior wall and protect your head and neck with your arms. Avoid danger spots near windows, hanging objects, mirrors or tall, unsecured furniture.

HOLD - If you take cover under a piece of furniture hold on to it and be prepared to move with the furniture. Hold the position until the ground stops shaking and it is safe to move.

When in a **HIGH-RISE BUILDING**, move against an interior wall if you are not near a desk or table. Protect your head and neck with your arms. Do not use the elevators.

When **OUTDOORS**, move to a clear area away from trees, signs, buildings, or downed electrical wires and poles.

When on a **SIDEWALK NEAR A BUILDING**, move into a doorway and drop to protect yourself from falling bricks, glass, plaster and other debris.

When **DRIVING**, pull over to the side of the road and stop. Avoid overpasses and power lines. Stay inside your vehicle until the shaking stops.

When in a **CROWDED STORE OR OTHER PUBLIC PLACE**, move away from display shelves containing objects that could fall. Do not rush for the exit.

When in a **STADIUM OR THEATRE**, stay in your seat, get below the level of the back of the seat and cover your head and neck with your arms.

APPENDIX D

Disaster Supplies Kit Checklist

Water

Store 1 gallon of water per person per day.

Have purifying agents available. Use only household liquid bleach that contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite.

Do not use scented bleaches, color safe bleaches or bleaches with added cleansers.

Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon; stir and let stand 30 minutes.

Food

Store at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable food for each person.

Select lightweight and compact items and rotate the food supply every 6 months.

Ready to eat canned meats, fruits
and vegetables

Milk - powdered or canned

Soups - bouillon cubes or dried
soups in a cup

Staples - sugar, salt, pepper

Stress foods - sugar cookies, hard
candy

Smoked or dried meats (jerky)

Juices - canned, powdered or
crystallized

Vitamins

High energy foods - peanut
butter, nuts, trail mix, etc.

Non-Prescription Medications

Aspirin or non-aspirin pain
reliever

Anti-diarrhea medication

Antacid

Emetic (to induce vomiting)

Laxative

Eye wash

Rubbing alcohol

Activated charcoal

Antiseptic or hydrogen
peroxide

Sanitation

Toilet paper, towelettes

Soap. Liquid detergent

Feminine supplies

Personal hygiene items

Plastic garbage bags/ties

Disinfectant

Small shovel to dig temporary
toilet

Plastic bucket with tight lid

Household chlorine bleach

Clothing and Bedding

One complete change of clothing and footwear per person
Sturdy shoes or work boots
Rain gear

Hat and gloves
Thermal underwear
Sunglasses
Blankets or sleeping bags

First Aid Kit

Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
Scissors
3-inch sterile gauze pads (8-12)
Needle
2-inch sterile gauze pads (8-12)
Tweezers
Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
Safety razor blade
Moistened towelettes (8-10 packages)
Non breakable thermometer

Antiseptic spray
Tongue blades and wooden applicator sticks
Non-breakable thermometer
Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
Assorted sizes of safety pins
Cleansing agent - soap (antibacterial)
Latex gloves
Bar of soap

Tools and Supplies

Mess kits or paper cups, plates, plastic utensils
Family emergency plan
Battery operated radio and extra batteries
Flashlight and extra batteries
Cash, change, travelers' checks
Non-electric can opener
Utility knife
Tent (small, lightweight packable)
Fire extinguisher, small canister ABC type
Tape
Pliers

Plastic storage containers
Compass
Aluminum foil
Paper, pencil
Signal flares
Medicine dropper
Needles, thread
Whistle
Shut-off wrench for gas and water
Plastic sheeting (tarps)
Dust mask and work gloves
Matches in waterproof container

Important Family Documents

Keep the following records in a waterproof, portable container:

Will	Inventory of valuable household goods
Insurance Policies, Contracts, Deeds	Important telephone numbers
Stocks and Bonds	Family Records
Bank Account Numbers	Birth Certificates
Passports	Marriage Certificates
Social Security Cards	Death Certificates
Immunization Records	Credit Card account numbers and companies

Special Items

Remember family members with special needs such as infants, elderly or disabled individuals.

For Adults

Heart and high blood pressure medications
Insulin
Prescription drugs
Denture needs
Contact lenses and supplies
Extra eye glasses
Games for children, books for adults

For Baby

Formula
Bottles
Diapers
Medications
Powdered milk

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Out of area contact

Name:
Address:
Telephone (day):
Telephone (night):

Local area contact

Name:
Address:
Telephone (day):
Telephone (night):

Police:

Fire:

Hospital:

Family Physician:

Family Work Numbers

Mother:

Father:

Other:

Reunion Locations

Within your local area:

Away from your local area:

APPENDIX E

EEOC GUIDELINES ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Fact Sheet on Obtaining and Using Employee Medical Information as Part of Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Introduction

In light of recent events, many employers are developing or re-evaluating emergency procedures to ensure the safe evacuation of all employees. A comprehensive emergency evacuation plan should provide for prompt and effective assistance to individuals whose medical conditions may necessitate it. Many employers have asked how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act affect their ability to achieve this goal.⁽¹⁾ Specifically, employers have asked whether they may request information to help identify individuals who might need assistance because of a medical condition and whether they can share this information with others in the workplace. As the following questions and answers demonstrate, federal disability discrimination laws do not prevent employers from obtaining and appropriately using information necessary for a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan.⁽²⁾

1. May an employer ask employees whether they will require assistance in the event of an evacuation because of a disability or medical condition?

Yes. Some employees may need assistance because of medical conditions that are not visually apparent. Others may have obvious disabilities or medical conditions but may not need assistance. Employers, therefore, are allowed to ask employees to self-identify if they will require assistance because of a disability or medical condition.

2. How may an employer identify individuals who may require assistance?

There are three ways that an employer may obtain information:

After making a job offer, but before employment begins, an employer may ask all individuals whether they will need assistance during an emergency. An employer also may periodically survey all of its current employees to determine whether they will require assistance in an emergency, as long as the employer makes it clear that self-identification is voluntary and explains the purpose for requesting the information.

Finally, whether an employer periodically surveys all employees or not, it may ask employees with known disabilities if they will require assistance in the event of an emergency. An employer should not assume, however, that everyone with an obvious disability will need assistance during an evacuation. For example, many individuals who are blind may prefer to walk down stairs unassisted. People with disabilities are generally in the best position to assess their particular needs.

An employer should inform all individuals who are asked about their need for emergency assistance that the information they provide will be kept confidential and shared only with those who have responsibilities under the emergency evacuation plan. (See Question 4 below.)

3. May an employer specifically ask what type of assistance will be needed?

Yes. An employer may ask individuals who indicate a need for assistance because of a medical condition to describe the type of assistance they think will be needed. One way that this can be done is by giving all employees a memo with an attached form requesting information. The employer also may have a follow-up conversation with an individual when necessary to obtain more detailed information. For example, it would be important for an employer to know whether someone who uses a wheelchair because of mobility limitations is able to walk independently, with or without the use of crutches or a cane, in an emergency situation. It also would be important for an employer to know if an individual will need any special medication, equipment, or device (*e.g.*, an assisted wheelchair carrier strap or a mask because of a respiratory condition) in the event of an emergency. Of course, an employer is entitled only to the information necessary for it to be prepared to provide assistance. This means that, in most instances, it will be unnecessary for an employer to know the details of an individual's medical condition.

4. Who is allowed to have information about employees needing assistance in an emergency?

The ADA has provisions that require employers to keep medical information about applicants and employees confidential. These provisions, however, include an exception that allows an employer to share medical information with first aid and safety personnel. This exception would allow an employer to share information about the type of assistance an individual needs, in the event of an evacuation, with medical professionals, emergency coordinators, floor captains, colleagues who have volunteered to act as "buddies," building security officers who need to confirm that everyone has been evacuated, and other non-medical personnel who are responsible for ensuring safe evacuation. These individuals are entitled to the information necessary to fulfill their responsibilities under the employer's emergency evacuation plan.

1. The ADA applies to private employers with fifteen or more employees and to state and local government employers. The Rehabilitation Act applies to most federal employers, and its substantive requirements are the same as those that apply to employers covered by the ADA.

2. The Commission previously has issued more detailed guidance on related issues concerning disability-related inquiries and medical examinations of applicants and employees. See Enforcement Guidance: Pre-employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (October 10, 1995) and Enforcement Guidance: Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations of Employees Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (July 27, 2000). These and other guidances are available on this web site.

More information on emergency preparedness for employees with disabilities can be found on the President's New Freedom Initiative Disability Direct web site <http://www.disabilities.gov/category/6/51> and on the Job Accommodation Network's web site at <http://janweb.icbi.wvu.edu/media/emergency.html>.

Source: EEOC web site www.eeoc.gov/facts/evacuation/html (10/31/01)