Emergencies occur when we least expect them. It is important to be as prepared as possible when an emergency arises on campus. Thinking ahead and planning is especially important for people with disabilities and others who may need more time or assistance during an evacuation when elevators are usually not available. Whether you are using crutches for a few months or have a permanent disability, it is important to plan an evacuation strategy ahead of time.

Remember that you may not be in your office or normal work location when an alarm sounds. When attending classes, meetings or events, notice your surroundings including nearby exits and possible safe areas to remain in the event of an evacuation.

These Guidelines provide several options and general information. If you have specific questions about the best evacuation strategy for your building and situation contact the campus Fire and Life Safety Officer in the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) department, at 503-725-3738 or ehs@lists.pdx.edu.

You can also voluntarily identify yourself in the PSU Alert Emergency Notification System as someone needing extra assistance. Once you voluntarily register, the location of your work office, residence hall and/or class schedule is provided to the Campus Public Safety Office (CPSO). This information can then be used in an emergency to alert responders that you may need assistance.

To register, log in to Banweb at banweb.pdx.edu and update your information in the PSU Alert Emergency Notification System. In addition to registering, planning ahead using these Guidelines is the best way to support your personal safety no matter where you are on campus during an emergency situation.
General Guidelines

Everyone must try to evacuate to the nearest safe exit. If possible, identify at least two emergency passageways you can use that lead to either an exit or an Area of Refuge (see below).

Ask a friend or co-worker if they can provide assistance if an emergency requiring evacuation occurs. Inform this person of the best way to assist you during an evacuation, and ensure they are able to inform emergency responders of your location and needs during an emergency.

For your safety and the safety of your friend or co-worker, only trained emergency responders should attempt to carry individuals down the stairs.

Options for Evacuation

Four basic options to consider when planning your evacuation strategy are:

1. Horizontal Evacuation. Use building exits to access outside ground level, another building or an unaffected wing of multi-building complexes. For example, use a sky bridge to exit to another building where the elevator can be taken to the ground floor.

2. Stairway (vertical) Evacuation. Use stairwells to reach ground level exits from the building.

3. Stay in Place. Unless danger is imminent, your best option may be to remain in a room with an exterior window, a telephone and a solid or fire resistant door. Inform a friend or co-worker of your location, and have them notify emergency responders when they reach the evacuation assembly point outside. Call 911 and inform them of your location. Emergency responders will determine the necessity for evacuation. If phones are unavailable, you can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object.

4. Area of Refuge. Go to an area of refuge away from obvious danger. Inform a friend or co-worker of your location, and have them notify emergency responders when they reach the evacuation assembly point outside. If you have a cell phone, call 911 and inform them of your location. Emergency responders will determine the necessity for evacuation.
Additional Planning Considerations

Contact the campus Fire and Life Safety Officer (503-725-3738, ehs@lists.pdx.edu) ahead of time to assist you in identifying an appropriate strategy and/or location to remain in an emergency. Here are some considerations you may wish to include in your planning.

The safest Areas of Refuge are stair enclosures common to high-rise buildings, and open-air exit balconies. Other possible Areas of Refuge include fire-rated corridors of vestibules adjacent to exit stairs and 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 stairs is a good alternative to a small stair landing crowded with the other building occupants using the stairways as a means of egress in an emergency.

The Stay in Place approach may be appropriate when there is not an Area of Refuge nearby, or if you are alone when an alarm sounds. Fire resistant doors are identified by a label on the door jamb or frame. Non-labeled 1 ¾ inch thick solid core wood doors hung on a metal frame also offer good fire resistance.

Suggested Guidelines for Different Types of Disabilities

1. Mobility Impaired - Wheelchair

Stay in Place or move to an Area of Refuge when the alarm sounds, and inform a friend or coworker of your location. The friend should proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the building and alert emergency responders to your location. If you have access to a phone, call 911 and inform them of your location. Emergency responders will determine the necessity for evacuation.

NOTE: If the stair landing is chosen as the Area of Refuge, please note that many campus buildings have relatively small stair landings. Wheelchair users are advised to wait until the heavy traffic has passed before entering the stairway. Stairway evacuation of wheelchair users should be conducted only by trained emergency responders.
Suggested Guidelines for Different Types of Disabilities (continued)

2. Mobility Impaired - Non Wheelchair

If you are able to walk independently and may be able to safely negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance, wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. If there is no immediate danger (such as detectable smoke, fire or an unusual odor), you may choose to stay in the building per the options listed above. Inform a friend or coworker of your location. The friend should proceed to the evacuation assembly point outside the building and alert emergency responders to your location. If you have access to a phone call 911 and inform them of your location. Emergency responders will determine the necessity for evacuation.

3. Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Most buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights, however some areas are not. If you are unsure if your building is equipped with strobe lights, contact the Fire and Life Safety Officer (503-725-3738, ehs@lists.pdx.edu) for an assessment of your work area. Reasonable accommodations for hearing loss may be met by modifying the building fire alarm system, particularly if you spend most of your day in one location. Persons needing such accommodation should contact Human Resources if you are an employee, and the Disability Resource Center if you are a student.

In addition, you may choose to ask a friend or coworker to alert you of emergency situations.

4. Visually Impaired

Become familiar with emergency evacuation routes in the areas where you spend most of your time. The Fire and Life Safety Officer can help you identify the safest evacuation route from your worksite or living space. Ask a friend or coworker to plan on assisting you in emergency evacuations, and ensure they are also familiar with the route. Inform them of the type of assistance that will be most helpful to you, such as offering their elbow and communicating as necessary to assure safe evacuation.
Additional Resources

Prior planning is important in ensuring a safe evacuation. For additional support and information, contact the Environmental Health and Safety Department (503-725-3738, ehs@lists.pdx.edu) or visit Emergency Planning for People Needing Assistance for more resources.