



POLICY No:	III-I-20-24
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TITLE:	EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES
ISSUED BY:	Occupational Health and Safety
APPROVED BY:	AODA Committee, Joint Health and Safety Committee
KEYWORDS:	Emergency Response, Disabilities
STAKEHOLDERS:	Occupational Health and Safety, Emergency Procedures Committee

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POLICY STATEMENT

Sinai Health is committed to maintaining the safety and security for all SH people, including physicians, students/learners, volunteers, contractors, patients, and visitors. Sinai Health will provide an organized response to a potentially harmful event, including social order disruptions or mass casualty incidents, within close proximity to the hospital which may pose a threat to the safety and security of staff, patients, and visitors.

All Sinai Health people are expected to follow this policy and the described process for 24/7 emergency response to an emergency situation inside or outside the organization's premises.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy outlines the responsibilities and processes to identify employees who require assistance in the event of an emergency situation and to develop a plan to ensure all SH people are able to evacuate a hazardous environment.

It is an expectation that all staff involved in assisting employees with disabilities during an emergency response, do so in a safe manner. SH people must also ensure the environment, equipment, and tools used during the emergency response are safe and in good working condition.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Employee requiring assistance:** employees with a permanent or temporary disability that may affect their ability to evacuate the building safely during an emergency. Examples of disabilities that may affect safe evacuations could include, but are not limited to: physical disabilities - where a person's mobility impacts climbing/descending stairs, or sensory disabilities – where a person's hearing or sight level impacts identifying emergency alarms, signs, emergency equipment and evacuation directions.
2. **Buddy:** the staff member assigned during the planning stage, who will assist the employee requiring assistance during an evacuation.
3. **Refuge zone:** Refuge Zone refers to fire/smoke compartments in inpatient care unit floor areas (*non-ambulatory*). There are at least two *Refuge Zones* on each inpatient care floor. They are separated by fire-rated smoke barriers. Typically, the north and south sides of an inpatient floor area are separate *Refuge Zones*. These zones provide for horizontal evacuation from a zone under threat of smoke or fire to a safe zone. Access to an adjacent zone is through designated double-door or single-door doorways in main corridors. Ambulatory floor areas are not generally designed with separate *Refuge Zones*.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Senior Leadership**

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- Ensure every reasonable precaution under the circumstances is taken to protect the health and safety of employees.
- Provide the means for staff to undertake their duties to the best of their ability.

2. Managers/Supervisors

- Ensure employees are trained and aware of the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.
- Be aware of employees with permanent disabilities and/or those who require temporary assistance to evacuate.
- Notify the Occupational Health and Safety Department and other stakeholders as required, in order to develop and communicate individual emergency response plans.
- Discuss with the person requiring assistance to determine the level of assistance needed to evacuate a floor area. Determine the necessity for an individualized emergency response plan based on the procedure below to achieve the established emergency procedures for the unit and building.
- Assign a buddy to the employee when required based on their emergency response plan.
- Review and discuss codes and emergency planning with all staff regularly in the event the assigned buddy is not available during the emergency event.
- Review the individualized emergency response plan when an employee moves to a different location within the organization.
- For all locations other than 600 University Avenue, designate fire wardens. Wardens are to be aware of persons requiring assistance and what measures are needed to evacuate the building safely.
- Work with Occupational Health and Safety, Building Services, and Capital and Redevelopment Office to ensure infrastructure, equipment or technology solutions are available for those requiring accommodation (i.e. strobe lights, visual aids, text-to-speech communication aids, location tracking phone apps as recommended for the individual emergency response plan).

3. Employees

- Participate in training on the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.

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- Assist those with disabilities if they need help. Follow procedures as required.
- If assigned to be a buddy, communicate to the employee who requires assistance if you will be away and unable to provide assistance.
- Communicate absence to manager in order to ensure another buddy is assigned, if needed.

4. Employees that Require Assistance

- Inform your supervisor or manager if you require assistance in the event of an emergency situation.
- Work with your supervisor or manager to determine an individualized plan that will achieve the results intended by the unit and building's established emergency procedures.
- Inform your supervisor or manager if your condition changes, requiring different, more or less assistance.
- During an emergency requiring evacuation, communicate to staff members if additional assistance is needed.
- If you have a buddy as part of your evacuation plan, maintain communication with your buddy

5. Occupational Health and Safety

- During employee health reviews for new hires, identify permanent/temporary disabilities that may require specific assistance during an evacuation.
- Areas of disabilities may be identified during employment if an employee develops a life altering illness or injury.
- Review, update, and communicate the general emergency response plan for employees requiring assistance.

As part of the return to work planning process for employees with disabilities, identify any specific requirements related to their disability that would warrant an individualized emergency response plan.

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- During the return to work/permanent accommodation planning, have the manager identify how the emergency response measures for the employee will be applied within their department. In collaboration with the manager and employee, review the employee’s specific needs and requirements for safe evacuation.
- Document the employee’s individualized emergency response plan in their disability management file. Using [Appendix A](#).
- Review and update the individualized emergency response plan when the employee’s overall accommodations needs or return to work plans change.
- Work with Building Services, Capital and Redevelopment Office to ensure new construction areas include infrastructure for those needing accommodation.

6. Emergency Procedures Committee

- Ensure Code policies/procedures incorporate general procedures and considerations for persons requiring assistance to evacuate a hazardous environment in accordance with this policy.
- Include this procedure into the review of all general emergency response policies.

7. Joint Health and Safety Committee

- Review this policy annually

PROCEDURE

If there is an immediate threat on the floor that requires evacuation and the emergency evacuation plan includes the assistance of an assigned buddy, the buddy will assist in as planned. In the event the assigned buddy is not available during the incident, the person requiring assistance will identify themselves to the evacuation team leader/designate, or any staff member in the area, so a buddy can be assigned and assist the employee. To evacuate, follow the procedure below:

1. Move horizontally on the same floor away from the danger, if possible. If located in a critical care or in-patient area, the employee requiring assistance will be helped to the adjacent refuge zone.
2. If the employees are unable to move horizontally, the employee requiring assistance, including those in wheelchairs, will be assisted to the closest stair exit. If in the process of descending/ascending the exit stairs the person is unable to continue, or if the person

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is in a wheelchair, the buddy will stay on the landing or stop at the next landing and position the employee so the pathway is not obstructed for others evacuating the floor.

- a. Based on the building location, the buddy will:
 - i. 600 University Ave: Call or have a team member call Switchboard/Locating to inform them of their status and location
 - ii. All other locations: have a team member notify the emergency responders of their status and location according to the established procedures for that building
3. The buddy is to stay with the employee requiring assistance until the area has been cleared by the emergency responders in charge of the incident.

DO NOT WAIT AT ELEVATOR LOBBIES: Elevator use for persons requiring assistance is not permitted, unless authorized by the municipal emergency responders.

REFERENCES

1. Occupational Health and Safety Act, Industrial Establishments
2. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

RELATED FORMS AND POLICIES

- Code Green
- Code Red
- Code Orange
- Code Grey

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Individualized Emergency Response Plan Agreement

Name:

Position:

Date:

Department and Location:

Managers Name:

Restrictions:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Occupational Health, Wellness and Safety Department is aware of the need for accommodation regarding an individualized emergency response plan. All participants are in agreement that your permanent or temporary health condition can currently be accommodated within your position. Below is your individualized workplace emergency response plan as agreed upon on **(insert date)**.

Please describe the individualized emergency response plan below and include details such as meeting location and name of the buddy if applicable

This individualized emergency response plan must be reviewed when;

- the employee moves to a different location or starts working on different shift in the organization
- the employee’s overall accommodation needs are changed
- the employee or the department have an issue with the ability to accommodate
- Abilities Coordinator determines that there is a need for review

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The employee is to report to Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness if they move or experiences any changes in their permanent or temporary health condition so that the existing accommodation and the plan could be reassessed and modified as appropriate.

The employee consents that this information can be shared with anyone designated to provide assistance in an emergency.

A copy of this agreement will be provided to all parties.

The signatures below reflect all participants involved in the approval of this accommodation and emergency response plan.

Employee Signature:	Date:
_____	_____
Manager Signature:	Date:
_____	_____
Buddy Signature (if applicable):	Date:
_____	_____
Occupational Health and Safety:	Date:
_____	_____