



Emergency Guidelines for Michigan State University

How to Assist Persons with Disabilities

Emergencies may include fires, tornado warnings, explosions, life safety issues, serious injuries, crime in progress, bomb threats, and hazardous material release emergencies. Michigan State University has developed an individualized **Emergency Action Plan** for each building on campus, and specially trained and designated university employees have been assigned as Emergency Coordinators. When emergency coordinators are available (coordinators wear yellow helmets), follow their directions or those from any police or fire personnel during an emergency.

This publication is designed to provide basic guidelines for an emergency which might occur when emergency coordinators are not available.

FOR ANY EMERGENCY...CALL 9-1-1 AND REPORT THE LOCATION AND TYPE OF EMERGENCY. FOLLOW THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

In case of fire or explosions:

- Pull the alarm located near most marked exits.
- Leave the building by the nearest safe marked exit.
- Follow directions of police or fire personnel.
- Close doors as you leave to retard the spread of toxic atmosphere, smoke and/or flame. If time permits, coats and valuables should be taken since the building may be closed for some time.

For tornado warnings:

- Seek shelter immediately in a designated area. Move immediately to shelter if a tornado warning is issued by any ONE of the following signals...an on-campus siren, local TV or radio, or personal notification.
- Shelter locations are indicated on Emergency Floor Plan Maps posted throughout each building.
- You can go to any interior room, free of windows or hazards. If you choose to go to a basement or lower level, you should not use a stairway with windows if severe weather is present.

For spills and leaks of hazardous materials:

- Follow instructions from emergency personnel.
- If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, you will be instructed which routes and exits from the building to use and where the safest rally sites will be.
- If the emergency requires you to stay in the building, you may be instructed to close and seal off all exterior doors and windows, shut off any room air sources like window air conditions or fume hoods, or be prepared to move to a safe area in the building.

Assisting Persons with Disabilities in an Emergency

Keep in mind that someone with a permanent disability generally knows the best way to be assisted. A minute or so spent talking with the individual will give you crucial information.

As a general rule, there is no reason that individuals who are blind or deaf cannot use the stairs to make an independent escape as long as they can effectively be notified of the need to evacuate and can find the stairway.

When assisting persons with vision impairments, there are some basic rules to follow in order to be effective:

- Announce your presence; speak out when entering the area. Speak naturally and directly to the individual and NOT through a third party.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Let the individual grasp your arm or shoulder lightly for guidance. He/she may choose to walk slightly behind you to gauge your body reactions to obstacles; be sure to mention stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, etc.
- Ensure that after exiting the building that individuals with impaired vision are not “abandoned” but are led to a place of safety, where someone should remain with them until the emergency is over.

When assisting owners of service dogs:

- Do not pet or offer the dog food without the permission of the owner.
- When a guide dog is wearing its harness, he is on duty. If you want the dog not to guide its owner, have the owner remove the dog’s harness.
- Plan for the dog to be evacuated with the owner.

When assisting persons with hearing impairments, there are also some things to keep in mind. These include:

- Flick the lights when entering the work area to get the person's attention.
- Establish eye contact with the individual, even if an interpreter is present.
- Check to see if you have been understood and repeat if necessary.
- Offer pencil and paper.

Persons with learning disabilities may have difficulty in recognizing or being motivated to act in an emergency by untrained rescuers. They may also have difficulty in responding to instructions which involve more than a small number of simple actions.

Some suggestions for assisting them include:

- The individual should be treated as an adult who happens to have a cognitive or learning disability. Do not talk down to them or treat them as children. A person's ability to understand speech is often more developed than his/her own vocabulary.
- Directions or information may need to be broken down into simple steps. Be patient.

Individuals with psychiatric disabilities may experience a variety of reactions to emergency situations. Some suggestions for assisting them include:

- Approach the individual with a calm demeanor (don't shout or raise your voice).
- Make sure directions are given very succinctly. Break down instructions into simple steps. Be patient.
- The most common reaction to watch for is hyperventilating. If this occurs, the individual should breathe into a paper bag until the symptoms subside.

For people who are mobility impaired or use wheelchairs, evacuation from basements or upper floors can be difficult because elevators may not be used during an emergency.

Three courses of action are possible. Some may...

- Proceed to an enclosed, safe, fire rated stairwell or one of the emergency areas designated for people with disabilities and wait for assistance. Their location must be reported by dialing 9-1-1 or by actually reporting to the nearest emergency responder (fire, police, etc.) immediately.
- Remain in the room. If the hazard is not near the location and the room is well constructed, this may be the best choice. Their location must be reported by dialing 9-1-1 or by actually reporting to the nearest emergency responder (fire, police, etc.) immediately.
- Be assisted in using the stairs or ramps to evacuate. However, great care must be taken in moving a person who uses a wheelchair or may have impaired mobility. Except in cases of extreme emergency, assistance in evacuation should only be performed by trained emergency responders (fire, police, etc.).

Someone using a crutch or cane might be able to negotiate stairs independently. It is best NOT to interfere with this person's movement. You might be of assistance by offering to

carry an extra crutch. If the stairs are crowded, you can act as a buffer and “run interference”.

RESOURCES

President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Issues
**Office for Affirmative Action,
Compliance and Monitoring, and ADA Coordinator**
Michigan State University
102 Olds Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
517-353-3925 (V/TTY)
<http://diversity.msu.edu>
aacm@msu.edu

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD)
Michigan State University
120 Bessey Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
517-353-9642 (V)
517-355-1293 (TTY)
<http://www.rcpd.msu.edu>
rcpd@msu.edu

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472
202-646-4600
<http://www.fema.gov>

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**POLICE/FIRE/
EMERGENCY DIAL 911**
MSU Police Service Desk -- 517-355-2221
MSU Police Investigations -- 517-353-3162
Safety and Public Health -- 517-353-5360

Emergency Management

Michigan State University Police and Public Safety Department

87 Red Cedar Road

East Lansing, MI 48824

<http://www.dpps.msu.edu/parksafe/eman.htm>

Emergency Management Coordinator:

Insp. William T. Wardwell, wardwel4@msu.edu, 517- 432-1594

Emergency Action Team Coordinator:

Sergeant Maureen Kennedy, kennedy@police.msu.edu