Workplace Safety
for People with Disabilities

Plan Ahead

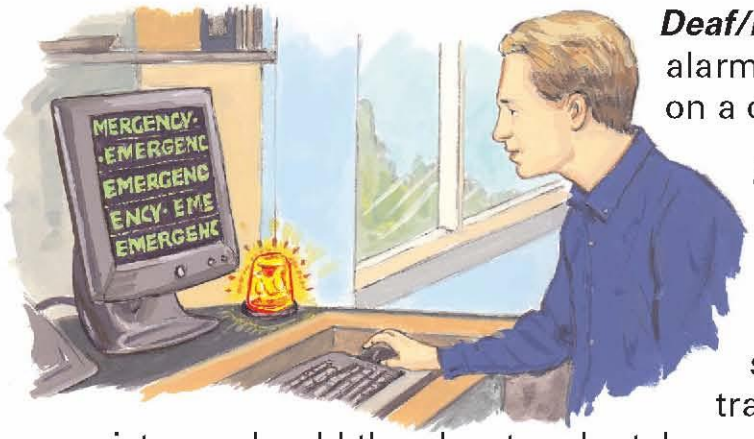
Emergency Plan **-** Learn about the safety plan in your workplace, and what you will be expected to do in the event of a fire or other emergency in your work area.

Planning Team **-** Ask to be on the planning team. *Involving employees with disabilities in emergency planning is essential*

Assistance **-** Help identify what kind of assistance you need to alert you and help you leave the area or get you to a safe area within or outside the building during a fire or similar emergency if

- *you cannot see or understand emergency instructions,*
- *hear the alarms, or*
- *use the stairs without assistance*

Suggested Evacuation Aids



Deaf/Hard of Hearing **-** Visual/strobe light alarms, text pagers that vibrate, running text on a computer monitor.

Blind or Low Vision **-** Map out alternative paths of escape, then walk through those routes.

Mobility Impaired **-** Help review and select evacuation chairs and select and train fellow staff members — buddies — to assist you should the elevators be taken out of service. Make sure arrangements are made to have wheelchairs available after evacuation.

After effective evacuation aides are chosen, employers along with employees with disabilities, should decide who will implement the emergency plan, commit it to writing, and make it a part of the standard operating procedures. Share the plan with all employees for feedback. Practice the evacuation plan to make sure it works, and modify it as needed.

Emergency Drills and Training

Emergency drills, incorporating areas of refuge, buddies, paging devices, and evacuation chairs, should be performed to make sure all employees are familiar with the plan. Employees with disabilities should insist on participating in these drills.

Do not be left behind; do not accept being told to stay put until "someone comes to get you out" while everybody else evacuates.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Recognize the responsibility that people with disabilities have in ensuring their own safety. This should be stressed repeatedly in the planning phase and during emergency drills.

Maintain the Safety Plan

To ensure that components of the plan remain effective, the emergency plans should be practiced and accommodations updated periodically. A system for reporting new hazards and needs should be developed and all equipment used in emergency evacuations should be inspected, kept readily available, and in working order. A relationship with the local fire department and the first responders should be maintained, and all new employees should be made aware of the plan.

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