

VCU
Emergency Evacuation Procedures

FIRE SAFETY

Familiarize yourself with at least two ways to exit your building so that you are prepared in the event of an emergency.

If you hear or see a fire alarm, do not wait to be told to leave the building. Leave the building immediately using the nearest stairs. Direct all visitors and students to leave as well.

Before a Fire/Emergency:

- ✓ Know the locations of fire alarm pull stations and how to use them. (These are generally located near exits)
- ✓ Know the locations of the nearest exits in your area.
- ✓ Know the locations of, and how to use, the portable fire extinguishers in your area.
- ✓ Know your evacuation coordinator (usually the building manager).

Upon Discovering a Fire:

In the event that smoke or flame is present or the building alarm activates, staff should follow the five steps listed below. The acronym, **R. A. C. E. R.**, will serve as a reminder of the steps to follow.

- * **Remove** anyone in immediate danger. If the fire is in a patient care or visitor area, remove all people from that area. Remember, only remove someone if they are in immediate danger. Please review the section of this publication entitled “Emergency Evacuation for Persons with Disabilities.”
- * **Activate the alarm** by pulling the nearest fire alarm pull station. Call the emergency number, **828-1234**, and give any information that you have.
- * **Close all doors** as the areas are evacuated.
- * **Extinguish the fire if possible.** Use a portable fire extinguisher, if the fire has not spread beyond the point where it started, and you know how to operate a fire extinguisher.
- * **Relocate** to a safe area, go to the nearest stairwell and leave the building under the direction of the Floor Monitors

- ✓ DO NOT use elevators.
- ✓ If the exit is blocked by fire, heat or smoke, go to another exit. If all exits are blocked, return to your room, close the door and call **828-1234** to report your location to the rescue team.
- ✓ Students in classrooms or laboratories will be advised by their instructors to evacuate. Instructors must advise students of evacuation procedures at the start of each semester.

I. Evacuation Team Membership and Responsibility

A. Floor Monitors

Each department should appoint at least one Floor Monitor and one backup for their area. These persons are identified by red arm bands and will be responsible for ensuring their assigned area is evacuated. They should follow the five step protocol as listed:

1. When the alarm sounds, go door-to-door telling everyone in your area to leave the building.
2. Direct people to the nearest available exit.
3. Call the emergency number, **828-1234**.
4. Report to the Evacuation Coordinator outside the building.

Report any of the following:

- a. Your area is clear.
 - b. There is someone in your area who is unable to evacuate.
 - c. There is someone in your area who refuses to evacuate.
 - d. Any other information - visible smoke, flame, etc.
5. Once you are outside, direct people away from the building.

B. Evacuation Coordinator

An Evacuation Coordinator should be appointed with at least one backup person for each position. The coordinators should follow the seven step protocol as listed:

1. Call the emergency number, **828-1234**.

2. Go to a designated areas outside the building to meet the floor monitors as they finish evacuating their sections.
3. Keep track of which floor monitors have reported.
4. Give the fire department any information that you have, including:
 - a. which areas have not been evacuated.
 - b. the location of anyone who is unable to evacuate.
5. Instruct the floor monitors to help keep people away from the building.
6. Inform the VCU Police if there is anyone who refuses to evacuate.
7. After the emergency, obtain permission from the fire department before reentering the building.



II.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The following are general evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities during a fire and/or other building emergencies. Faculty, staff and students with disabilities must work with their instructors, building managers/evacuation coordinators, floor monitors and/or the VCU Safety Office to identify primary and secondary evacuation routes from each building they use.

Individuals with disabilities that may preclude them from quickly exiting a building need to:

- Be familiar with at least two evacuation options.
- Seek floor monitors, faculty and/or staff who are willing to assist in case of an emergency.
- Ask instructors, building managers, disability support services staff or the Safety Office about evacuation plans for the buildings.
- For evening/off hours classes, we suggest the instructor or a competent appointed volunteer act as an evacuation assistant for that class. Two people will be needed: someone to stay with the person with a disability (evacuation assistant) and one to relay location information to emergency personnel (normally a floor monitor).

Evacuation Options

An evacuation must start with this basic premise: Everyone must try to evacuate to the nearest safe exit. At least two emergency passageways must be identified in each building. Each passageway must either lead to an exit or a designated area of refuge.

There are four basic evacuation options:

- Horizontal Evacuation: using building exits to the outside ground level or going into unaffected wings of multi-building complexes (not common on Monroe Park Campus).
- Stairway (vertical) Evacuation: using steps to reach ground level exits from the building.
- Stay in Place: unless danger is imminent, remaining in a room with an exterior window, a cell phone, and a solid or fire resistant door is a viable option. With this approach, the person may keep in contact with VCU Police and/or emergency services by dialing **828-1234** and reporting his/her location directly. VCU Police will immediately relay the person's location to on-site emergency personnel, who will determine the necessity for evacuation. If the cell phone fails, the individual can signal from the window by waving a cloth or other visible object. VCU also uses the floor monitor system to let emergency personnel know who is still in the building.

The stay in place approach may be more appropriate for sprinkler protected buildings, or buildings where an "area of refuge" is not nearby or available. It may also be more appropriate for a person who is alone when the alarm sounds. A solid or fire-resistant door can be identified by a fire label on the jam or frame. Non-labeled 1 ¾ inch thick solid core wood doors hung on a metal frame also offer good fire resistance.

- Area of Refuge: with an evacuation assistant or instructor, go to the area of refuge away from obvious danger. The floor monitor or instructor will then go to the building evacuation rally point and notify the on-site emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability. After normal working hours if a floor monitor is not available, the instructor will appoint a class representative to relay this information. The evacuation assistant should remain with the individual with a disability until emergency assistance arrives or the all clear is given. Emergency personnel will determine if further evacuation is necessary.

The safest "areas of refuge" are stair enclosures, pressurized stair enclosures (common to high-rise buildings). Other possible "areas of refuge" include fire-rated corridors or vestibules adjacent to exit stairs or elevator lobbies. Taking a position in a rated corridor next to the stairs is a good alternative to a small stair landing crowded with other building occupants using the stairways as a means of exit in an emergency. For assistance identifying areas of refuge, call the Safety Office at 827-0357 or 828-0040.

Disability Guidelines

Mobility Impaired Wheelchair/Scooter

Persons using wheelchairs or scooters should “stay in place” or move to an “area of refuge” with their instructor or evacuation assistant when the alarm sounds. The floor monitor should then proceed to the evacuation rally point and notify the Evacuation Coordinator, VCU Police, or Richmond Bureau of Fire of the exact location of the person. If the person is alone, he/she should phone VCU Police at 828-1234 with their present location.

Please understand that it is not necessary and can be potentially harmful to carry students with disabilities down the stairs. Such action is dangerous and unnecessary given the built-in fire protections of the VCU buildings. If such an evacuation is warranted, the Richmond Bureau of Fire will take action.

Mobility Impaired Non-Wheelchair/Scooter

Persons with mobility impairments, who are able to walk independently, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. If there is not immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire or unusual odor), the person with a disability may choose to stay in the building, using the other options, until the emergency personnel arrive and determine if evacuation is necessary.

Hearing Impaired

Most buildings on campus are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights; however some are not. Persons with hearing impairments may not hear audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Instructors or floor monitors can provide emergency instructions by writing a short explicit note to evacuate.

Blind or Visually Impaired

Most people who are blind or visually impaired will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route is likely different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are blind or visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating. Instructors and/or floor monitors should offer their elbow to the individual and guide him/her through the evacuation route. During the evacuation the instructor/floor monitor should communicate as necessary to assure safe evacuation.

III. Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are to be used only after the evacuation plan of the building is underway. The VCU office of Environmental health and safety offers classes on how to use a fire extinguisher. Call 828-0040 to schedule a class for your department. If you know how to use a fire extinguisher, locate and identify the ones in your area before you need them. OEHS supplies and maintains several types of fire extinguishers:

Class A: for wood, paper, and cloth

Class B: for grease, paint and liquid flammables

Class C: For fires involving electric equipment

Class ABC: For all fires, except combustible metals.

Remember, only use an extinguisher AFTER you start the RACER procedures.