



WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF PERSONS WITH A PHYSICAL LIMITATION

PROCEDURE [S-119](#)

Please direct any questions or comments about the applicability of this document to  
Pano Koukopoulos, Director of Environmental Health and Safety

WCSU has been eliminating physical barriers in and around the campus buildings, allowing for expanded services to students, visitors or employees who are handicapped or temporarily disabled. Unfortunately, as persons who are mobility impaired travel upward in a structure, their ability to evacuate diminishes with each ascending floor.

The University is aware of this situation and has developed a policy that addresses the evacuation of people with disabilities during any emergency. Currently, the concept of “**Defend in Place**” is the policy adopted by fire professionals and shall be practiced at WCSU. This policy holds that it is better to locate persons who are disabled to “**protected areas**” of safety rather than out of the building through stairways, risking injury. “**Protected areas**” include any area with a minimum of one (1) hours’ worth of protection (rated fire walls/partitions). At WCSU, most office suites and all classrooms are protected areas.

Upon the sounding of a fire alarm, emergency personnel (Danbury Fire Department) who are trained and equipped to conduct evacuations of individuals who are disabled will respond to the location of the alarm. **It should be noted that a fire alarm might be activated for any emergency requiring the evacuation of the building.** During an evacuation, individuals who are disabled should remain or seek refuge in a protected area with doors closed, preferably with an outside window for fresh air. If smoke is present, stuff an article of clothing, such as a jacket or coat, under the door to prevent smoke from entering. A telephone should be used to communicate with emergency personnel. Individuals who are challenged must inform the University Police Department of their location. A faculty or staff member may elect to remain in the protected area with the person who is disabled.

To assist in the successful implementation of this policy, the following should occur:

- Faculty, staff and students should register with the appropriate University Office in order for information to be properly distributed.
- Whenever possible, individuals who are physically impaired should be located on the ground floor.
- A list of all students and their building and room number known to have a physical handicap residing in the residence halls shall be forwarded to the Police Department from the Housing Office.
- A list of all students known to have a physical handicap and their class schedules shall be forwarded to the Police Department from the Office of Accessibility Services.
- A list of all faculty and staff known to have a physical handicap and their office location shall be forwarded to the Police Department from the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs.
- The above-mentioned lists will be maintained at the University Police Department and updated, as needed, by the respective offices.
- Persons who are handicapped (or others knowledgeable of the situation) shall call the Police Department (at 911 from a campus phone or 837-9300) in the event of an alarm and give the location where the person with a handicap is.