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Emergency Travel Safety Tips for Overnight Stays

Edition 1 – October 2017

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Recommended Citation: Kailes, J.I. (2017), Emergency Travel Safety Tips for Overnight Stays, Edition 1 – October 2017, <http://www.jik.com>

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This document was made possible with support from:

- Grant to North Carolina Emergency Management from The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities Grant to North Carolina Emergency Management
- The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center and TransCen Inc. with support from National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR award number H133A110017). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this guide do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Emergency Travel Safety Tips for Overnight Stays

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The term “event” used in these tips refers to meetings and conferences. **Items with a [*] are specific for people with disabilities who because of a variety of disabilities (mobility, breathing, allergies, hearing, seeing, walking, understanding or chronic conditions) may have difficulty or be unable to:**

- use stairwells
- hear alarms
- see or read exit signs
- understand instructions

Staying Overnight

Check-in:

1. * If you know you will have difficulty, because of walking, mobility, seeing or hearing or other issues, in case of emergency, (i.e., fire, evacuation, etc.) consider:
 - 1.1. Let the registration staff know if you will need help evacuating.
 - 1.2. If using a mobile app or email system for check in, make these requests in the specific request box. Be specific about your needs, for example, I would like a room on the ground floor, I use a motorized wheelchair and will need assistance in an emergency evacuation, or I use a motorized mobility scooter and will need assistance using the stairs to evacuate, or I’m Deaf and need a room with a flashing alarm. Repeat your request when you check-in in person.
 - 1.3. Ask for a lower or ground floor guest room allowing for easier evacuation.
 - 1.4. Ask about the evacuation procedures if your guest room is above or below the ground floor.
 - 1.5. Ask if evacuation devices are available? (See Note 1)? If yes, where are they located?
 - 1.6. If you are Deaf or hard of hearing, ask for a room with a permanent visible fire alarm installed. If a permanent visible alarm is not installed in the room, ask that a temporary alarm be installed.

- 1.7. If you are blind or have partial vision, ask for an orientation to evacuation paths.
- 1.8. If front desk staff do not know the answers to your questions, ask that they connect you with staff who do. such as the security manager.

Note 1: Evacuation devices are fold-up chairs, which can be stored near emergency exits. They allow for people to be moved up or down stairs. These include carry-type or track-type devices.



Personal Support:

1. * Determine how you will get emergency help, if needed.
 - 1.1. Consider asking more than one person at the event [family, friends or colleagues] to check on you in the event of an emergency. This is important so you have at least one back-up if your primary person forgets, or is not available.
 - 1.2. * Don't use the door night latch or dead bolt lock button on your door if you will need evacuation assistance as you may not be able to get to the door in an emergency.
2. *Think through how best to ask for help quickly [from people you may not know] and give clear instructions on the kind of help you will need.
 - 2.1. * Practice giving quick, clear and quick instructions on how others can assist you. For example, how can they safely move you if you need to be carried with or without your wheelchair or another mobility device?
 - 2.1.1. Include areas of caution and vulnerability to safely assist, transfer, and move you.
 - 2.1.2. If you want to be carried in your wheelchair make sure this is realistic, considering how much your wheelchair weighs with you in it.

In Your Guest Room:

1. Pre-Plan Your Escape Routes:
 - 1.1. Review the emergency exit plan and escape routes posted in your room, generally located on the back of the entry door.
 - 1.1.1. Note all routes, especially the shortest route.

- 1.1.2. Count the number of doors and turns from your room door to exits.
 - 1.1.3. Make sure the exits are unlocked. If they are locked, report it right away.
 - 1.2. Find the nearest fire alarm. Generally, it is located near the exit or stairwell door or elevators. Read the instructions on how to use it or have someone instruct you on how to activate the alarm.
2. Program the phone number of the front desk and the facilities address into your cell phone.
3. Keep your cell phone, a flashlight (this maybe your cell phone), and room key within reach. If you are staying in an earthquake prone area, keep these secured in a nightstand drawer if available.
4. Sleep in clothes you can bear being seen in and have shoes within easy reach.
- 5. If the alarm sounds, vibrates or flashes or you smell smoke:**
 - 5.1. * Call 911, let them know the alarm has been activated, give the address. If you need help evacuating give your room number, floor number, its location (for example "North Tower") and state what type of help you need.
 - 5.2. * Then call the hotel operator or the front desk, tell them you called 911 and provide them with the same information. The operator will be getting many calls, so you may need to call multiple times to get your call answered.
6. Go to the door of your room and feel the door handle with the back of your hand. These doors are usually insulated (fire doors) and you may not detect heat on the other side. If the door handle is hot, do not open the door.
- 7. If the door handle is not hot:**
 - 7.1. Open the door slowly, but be ready to close it immediately if necessary.
 - 7.2. Take no chances. If you can leave safely:
 - 7.2.1. Quickly put on shoes, pick up your wallet, room key and cell phone, evacuate and close your door behind you.
 - 7.2.2. Go to the nearest exit.
 - 7.2.3. Use the stairs — never use elevators during a fire (unless instructed to do so by first responders).
 - 7.2.4. Proceed with care down to the ground level.
 - 7.2.5. If you must escape through smoke, thoroughly soak a towel and place it over your head/mouth/nose. Get low to the ground to stay under the smoke and move to the nearest emergency exit.
- 8. If the door handle is hot or there is fire or dense smoke in the hall:**
 - 8.1. Few people burn to death in fires, most fatalities come from breathing smoke. Avoiding excessive exposure to smoke should be your top concern.
 - 8.2. Keep your room door closed.
 - 8.3. It may be safer in your room.**
 - 8.3.1. Call 911 and let them know your location. (see number 5.1)

- 8.4. If there is smoke in your room and you are able, roll out of bed and crawl on the floor. – **DO NOT STAND!** Smoke and deadly gasses rise.
- 8.4.1. Stay low and, if you are able, place wet towels, sheets or other cloth items around the bottom of the door to keep smoke out of the room.
 - 8.4.2. Fill the bathtub. Use the ice bucket to keep the towels wet around doors.
 - 8.4.3. Do not break windows unless the smoke in your room is getting thick. Open or broken windows will draw the fire in your direction.
 - 8.4.4. If a window can open slightly, hang a sheet or other light colored visible item from the outside of the window to signal the fire fighters.
 - 8.4.5. If the window does not open, use your flashlight at the window to signal your location.
 - 8.4.6. Shut off fans and air conditioners.

Other Safety tips:

1. Make sure the door closes securely when entering and leaving your room.
2. Use safe deposit boxes (or in room safes) if available, to store valuable items or take valuables and essential medications with you when leaving your room.
3. Don't use the "Please Make Up Room" sign as it can indicate that the room is empty. Instead, call housekeeping when you need your room cleaned.
4. Ask about unsafe areas near the hotel.
5. Use the "Peep Hole" in the guestroom door to determine who is on the other side before you open the door. [All hotel staff members have uniforms and name tags. If you are in doubt as to the identity of the person outside your door, do not open the door. Telephone the Hotel Operator and ask about who the person is?]

Resources:

[Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#), (2016), National Fire Protection Agency

[Emergency Evacuation Preparedness: Taking Responsibility for Your Safety, A Guide For People with Disabilities and Other Activity Limitation](#) (2002)

[Emergency Response for People Who Have Access and Functional Needs: A Guide for First Responders](#)

[High Rise Evacuation for People with Disabilities](#) 4/10/13, Webinar Pacific ADA Center

[Tips for Emergency Use of Mobile Devices](#) Edition 2, (2015)