

# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

## REFUGE AREA PLAN FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED STUDENTS

6117  
Procedure No.

July 1, 2013  
Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide information regarding the evacuation of students who are either permanently or temporarily “physically challenged,” in the event of a fire or other emergency.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** There are students throughout the system who are non-ambulatory, requiring the use of a wheel chair or other aid. In most cases, these students are able to attend classes on the upper floors by using the elevator. However, in a fire emergency, the elevator is not available; therefore, the need exists for an emergency evacuation plan for those students.
- III. **INFORMATION:** The Prince George’s County Fire Department and Prince George’s County Public Schools, recognizing difficulties in evacuating the physically challenged from multi-level buildings, have developed the Fire Refuge Area Plan. This plan designates a room on each level to temporarily house students during an emergency. The plan intends to protect the students in an area of refuge until fire rescue personnel can remove them safely. The refuge area is pre-designated by the Fire Marshall and is to be fire protected.
- IV. **PROCEDURES:** Fire Refuge Area Plans should be established for multi-level school buildings with physically challenged students located on floors other than ground level. To the greatest extent possible, non-ambulatory students should be placed in classes on the ground floor. Where this is not possible, a refuge plan will be implemented. The refuge area evacuation should be implemented in all fire drills, as well as real emergencies.
  - A. Basic Concept of Refuge Areas
    1. Refuge Areas:
      - a. Two designated rooms, at opposite ends of the building, to which physically challenged students can report when the fire alarm sounds.
      - b. Are located on floors above or below the main entrance level or ground floor.
      - c. Serve as transition areas for students unable to evacuate on their own as they await removal by trained fire rescue personnel.
    2. Requirements for Refuge Areas:
      - a. Multi-level schools that enroll physically challenged students who will need assistance in an evacuation.
      - b. These students must be located on floors above or below the ground level entrance.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

REFUGE AREA PLAN  
FOR PHYSICALLY  
CHALLENGED STUDENTS

6117  
Procedure No.

July 1, 2013  
Date

3. Characteristics of Refuge Areas:
  - a. The room shall have a fire escape window accessible by fire ladder, and/or be located near a stairwell. (Fire escape window is not required if the entire building is sprinkle red.)
  - b. The door to the room shall be fired rated, self-closing, and latching.
  - c. To the greatest extent possible, the room will meet current fire codes and have a 1-2 hour fire rating. In certain situations a stairwell can be used.
  - d. The room shall be identified by two signs, one in the exterior window facing out and one next to the corridor (Attachment 1). In addition, the exterior window frame shall be painted bright orange to identify the room from the outside.
  - e. The room may be used for instruction or other functions when not in use as a refuge area.

B. Management and Coordination

1. Use of Refuge Areas:
  - a. The Fire Marshall, in conjunction with the principal and Safety Office, will designate the refuge area.
  - b. The principal will maintain a list of all physically challenged students who require use of a refuge area, and their specifically assigned area.
  - c. The list of students and their refuge area location will be provided to the first arriving fire company in the event of an emergency, so rescue personnel can proceed directly to the refuge area to remove occupants.
2. Supervision of Refuge Areas:
  - a. Members of the school staff will report to and supervise each refuge area when an alarm sounds. They will also be available to assist students getting to the area. There will be at least one supervisor for every five students.
  - b. If at all possible, the area will be equipped with a telephone or portable radio to stay in touch with the principal or outside designee.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

REFUGE AREA PLAN  
FOR PHYSICALLY  
CHALLENGED STUDENTS

6117  
Procedure No.

July 1, 2013  
Date

- c. Refuge supervisors will vacate the building only when: no students report to the refuge area, all students have been removed and accounted for, and safe egress is possible.

Only the Fire Marshall can officially designate an appropriate Fire Refuge Area (Attachment 2). These will be identified on a “mini” floor plan of the building, copies of which will be kept in the school office, and at the local fire company.

In order to establish Fire Refuge Areas in a facility, please contact the Safety Office, at 301-952-6564.

- V. **RELATED PROCEDURES:** Administrative procedure 6114.1, Fire Drills.
- VI. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure originates with the Safety Office and will be reviewed periodically.
- VII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 6117, dated January 1, 2002.
- VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2013.

Attachments: 1. Fire Refuge Area Identification Sign  
2. Fire Refuge Area Mini-Floor Plan

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10