BC HOUSING

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)
Program Overview

The **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) Program** is designed to ensure that residents with temporary or permanent disabilities can be safely alerted and evacuated during emergencies.

Who it's for	This **voluntary program** is available to residents who may face barriers to evacuation, including: • Individuals who use mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers) • Those with hearing or visual impairments • Residents with reduced motor skills or cognitive challenges • People with temporary conditions due to injury, illness, or recovery
What it does	• Accommodates the BC Fire Code requirement for assisting residents with disabilities to evacuate. • Identifies the need for assistive devices and communication support. • Promotes and supports residents to self-evacuate or receive help as needed.
Why it matters	**PEEPs promote safety, inclusion, and equity** by tailoring evacuation plans to individual needs.

PROCEDURE	
Planning process	A PEEP begins with a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the individual's specific evacuation requirements. This ensures the plan is tailored to their abilities and the building's life safety systems. All information is documented with strict attention to confidentiality.
Notification and safe evacuation	The plan ensures the individual is promptly alerted during emergencies and can evacuate safely and without delay.

Structured, personalized approach	Each PEEP follows a **six (6)-step process**, providing a clear, personalized strategy that prioritizes the individual's safety and dignity.
Confidential recordkeeping	Completed PEEPs are securely stored as part of emergency preparedness records, with access limited to authorized personnel only.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DEVELOPING A PEEP

When developing a PEEP, the **Fire Safety Director should assess and, where possible, integrate key building features and accessibility supports** to ensure a safe and equitable evacuation process for all residents. (In an SRO building, the Fire Safety Director is typically a designated staff member appointed by the housing provider or building management to oversee fire safety compliance and emergency procedures)

Types of Life Safety Systems in Residential Buildings

Building life safety systems	These systems are built into the structure and operate automatically or manually during a fire: • **Monitored fire alarms:** Automatically alert the fire department when activated. • **Sprinkler systems:** Suppress or slow the spread of fire, allowing more time to evacuate. • **Emergency lighting:** Illuminates exit paths during power outages or smoke conditions. • **Fire extinguishers:** Allow trained individuals to suppress small fires before they spread. • **Fire doors:** Help contain fire and smoke, protecting escape routes. • **Exit corridors and stairwells:** Provide safe paths for evacuation. • **Exit signs:** Clearly mark escape routes and exits. • **Standpipes and fire hose cabinets:** Provide water access for firefighting teams. • **Firefighter elevators:** Designed for emergency personnel use during fire response. • **Voice communication systems:** Deliver clear instructions, especially helpful for visually or cognitively impaired residents.
Staffing & training	• Staffing levels impact evacuation support, especially for residents with disabilities

	• Staff training ensures readiness to respond, proper use of equipment, and assist vulnerable residents
Evacuation infrastructure	• Areas of refuge (including exit stairwells, exit corridor and exterior fire escape ladders) are specially designed safe spaces for people who can't evacuate during a fire. They are part of the building's life safety systems and are clearly marked in the fire safety plan. Unlike regular stairwells, these areas meet specific safety standards. • Voice communication systems, typically found in tall residential buildings, are used by the fire department to broadcast clear emergency instructions to residents, including those who are visually or cognitively impaired.
Accessibility Features and Supports	
Physical, visual & auditory aids	To support residents with a wide range of disabilities, buildings should incorporate multiple types of accessible features: • **Tactile strips and braille signage:** Help individuals with vision loss navigate safely. • **Handrails on both sides of exits and stairwells:** Assist people with mobility challenges or balance issues. • **Strobe lights and visual alarms:** Alert residents who are deaf or hard of hearing during emergencies. • **Audible alarms and voice alerts:** Support those with vision impairments or cognitive disabilities who benefit from clear sound cues. • **Barrier-free pathways and doorways:** Ensure wheelchair users and others with mobility aids can evacuate without obstruction. • **Elevator accessibility features:** Include braille buttons, voice announcements, and emergency call systems. • **Clear signage with high contrast and simple language:** Aid residents with low vision or cognitive impairments.
Communication and information	• Offer emergency info in large print or accessible formats • Use simple diagrams to show evacuation routes
Personalized support measures	• Tailor evacuation training to individual disability needs • Assign trained staff to support alerts and evacuation • Provide stair descent devices for safe relocation

	• House those with mobility challenges on ground floors when possible
Plan maintenance & visibility	• Regularly review plans and modify as required to keep them current. • Post emergency procedures on the back of suite doors for quick reference.

Types of Evacuation Strategies

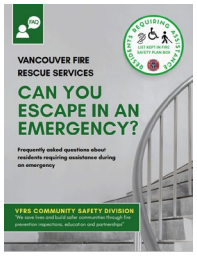
Full evacuation	All occupants evacuate the building using the nearest safe exit and proceed to the designated assembly area.
Partial evacuation	Partial evacuation may occur for specific floors or zones, depending on the fire location and severity. Firefighters make this decision after assessing conditions on site. Occupants in unaffected areas may be asked to stay in place temporarily.
Defend-in-Place* **	Defend-in-place means remaining inside your unit during a fire emergency. This approach should only be taken when specifically recommended in your Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). In certain situations, firefighters may instruct occupants to defend-in-place for their safety.

The Buddy System

Purpose	• Supports individuals with mobility, sensory, cognitive, or temporary impairments during emergency evacuations.
When effective	• Works best when trusted volunteers are available. • Should align with evacuation strategies (full, partial, or defend-in-place***), assuming most residents live independently.
Strengths and limitations	• Effective in office settings • Valuable as part of a broader evacuation strategy • Cannot function as a stand-alone strategy • Requires multiple trained and physically capable volunteers • Involves privacy, trust, and communication considerations • Needs regular training and updates to remain effective

VRFS initiative: Resident Requiring Assistance

PEEP

Purpose	• Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) support residents with impairments during evacuations. • Helps fire crews identify those needing help during evacuation with a voluntary registry.	
When effective	• Requires a secure Fire Safety Plan box with a visible sticker. • Needs regular updates and alignment with evacuation plans.	
Strengths and limitations	• Supports inclusive planning in residential buildings. • Improves coordination among residents, staff, and fire services. • Not a stand-alone strategy—needs regular updates and safeguards for privacy. • Depends on voluntary participation and clear communication.	