



Med Sled Case Study

Southern Illinois University in Carbondale

Overview

Ranked by The Princeton Review as one of the Best Midwestern Universities and Best Valued Colleges in the nation, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale continues to be a step ahead of the rest. The University not only recognizes the importance of providing a strong curriculum for its students, but also their safety.

SIU provides a learning environment for more than 1,500 students. In light of recent tragic events at other universities, and also in preparation for natural disasters and non-violent emergencies, the University chose to pay special attention to campus and building evacuation plans.

The University acknowledged that individuals, most notably those with special needs or physical disabilities, might need assistance evacuating a building during an emergency. SIU looked to its local hospital for emergency preparedness planning and suggestions, and began searching for a product that would ensure safe and efficient evacuation.

Strategy

Office Administrator LaVon Donley-Cornett looked into possible solutions for emergency evacuation. Following various product demonstrations, Donley-Cornett conducted additional research online and considered the options. Finally, she found information regarding a new and unique evacuation sled called the Med Sled.

"We have a lot of special needs students, and we wanted to make sure we addressed their needs in an organized evacuation," Donley-Cornett said. "Most of the other products were more expensive and took time to put together and the Med Sled was less expensive, simpler and faster to put together. [The Med Sled] also looked much more durable."

In 2008, SIU's department of Mass Communication and Media Arts purchased two standard sleds for use in the three-story building, which houses a total of seven academic departments. Then, the department began training members of their Building Emergency Response Team on the Med Sled. The members have had two training sessions thus far and will be tested for the first time during the school's emergency fire drill this fall, which requires a campus-wide evacuation.

Donley-Cornett loves that the Med Sled is quick, durable and affordable and believes that the purchase of a Med Sled has helped improve their emergency preparedness.

Prior to having Med Sleds, the standard escape route for people with disabilities included going to the basement floor of the building and using a ramp to evacuate. However, administrators and students noticed that the ramp was too steep and that some doorways were too narrow for this to be an effective mode of evacuation.

"We felt there was a huge risk to their safety in [evacuating] this way," Donley-Cornett said.

Results

The University conducts two evacuation drills per year, a fire drill in the fall and a storm drill in the spring. Both drills will now incorporate the use of the Med Sled.

"We feel we can now get special needs people that can't use the elevator or stairs safely out of the building," Donley-Cornett said. "In a large emergency that involves the whole building, there is not time to wait for the police or fire department to get our people safely out. We have a team in place with training to effectively evacuate the building and the Med Sled is a part of our evacuation plan."