

Safety Alert – February 2023

Subject: Trapped in Fire Stairwell

UNSW Safety is issuing a Safety Alert to remind staff and students about accessing Emergency Exits via fire stairwells throughout UNSW buildings.

Background:

Recently, as a UNSW staff member was walking past a building Fire door, they heard a loud and urgent knocking coming from inside. On opening the door, a student was found trapped in the stairwell. The student had taken a wrong turn and went through the door to the stairwell, instead of the classroom door they were looking for. When the student turned back to retrace their steps and exit back out of the stairwell, the fire exit door was locked. The student tried to contact a friend to come and assist, but the phone reception was poor, and the student was unable to describe their exact location.

Most fire-isolated stairwell doors are locked from inside the stairwell as a security measure - to prevent people from travelling to open/common spaces into office spaces which are not publicly accessible. The final exit out of a building fire stairwell is always unlocked.

What is recommended going forward:

When using fire stairwells, always keep travelling DOWN to the lowest level to exit a building to the external surrounds.

- Try not to panic
- Walk safely down the stairs using handrails if available
- Carry your mobile phone with you (noting reception may be poor in some internal stairwells)
- Have the Staysafe@UNSW app uploaded to your mobile phone



THINK SAFE, BE SAFE, HOME SAFE

Further Information: safety@unsw.edu.au