

It's My Legs

Why Handling Wheelchairs with Care Matters



The Basics

- 1 The user knows their wheelchair. If in doubt, ask the expert.
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- 2 This device is the user's legs. Any damage could result in a cancelled trip. Worse still, it can mean a complete loss of independence – often for a long period while a replacement or repair is organised. For most powered wheelchair users, a temporary replacement will not work and could cause serious health damage.

Moving

- 3 Most wheelchairs have a manual freewheel push mode. If the wheelchair is not in freewheel mode, do not try to push or force it to move. This can cause serious damage. Engage freewheel before attempting to move the chair.

Lifting

- 4 Where possible avoid lifting the wheelchair.
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- 5 If you must lift, look for lifting points on the frame of the chair. Do not lift by the headrest, arms or footrests for example, as these are not designed as lifting points.
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- 6 Some chairs have tilt or riser mechanisms. Do not attempt to lift from the seat as this can damage the mechanisms.

Batteries

- 7 Batteries are generally sealed and safe.
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- 8 Do not tamper with the battery and do not unplug any cables. Wires should not be taken out or sealed with electric tape unless the user has given their consent.

Loading/Unloading and Securing

- 9 Do not tip the wheelchair on its side unless absolutely necessary, for example if it won't fit the bin door. If you need to tip, do so onto the non-joystick side.
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- 10 Use only securement points located on the frame of the wheelchair for tie down. Do not secure tie downs to footplates or backrest bars.
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- 11 If the wheelchair has many parts, and is checked in with separate tags, do not attempt to put it together without instructions from the user.
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- 12 Sometimes parts come loose. If this happens, arrange for them to be given to the user. Do not put them in the hold where they might get lost.
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- 13 If in doubt, ask a colleague or ask dispatch to speak to the user for advice.

Communication

- 14 If possible, alert the user that their wheelchair is loaded properly, so that they can relax and enjoy their journey.
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- 15 If there's been a problem and the wheelchair is damaged, let the user know so they can decide if they are able to continue with the flight.
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- 16 On arrival, tell the user when you can return their wheelchair to them. Arrange this as soon as possible, as wheelchair users often cannot use the toilet during flight.