Assembly Bill 2311 Planning Guidance

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), through its Office of Access and Functional Needs, issues the following guidance in order to assist counties and cities in the implementation of Assembly Bill 2311, which became law effective January 1, 2017.

Assembly Bill 2311 (Brown, Chapter 520, Statutes of 2016), which added California Government Code section 8593.3, requires each county and city to integrate access and functional needs upon the next update to its emergency response plan. Specifically, jurisdictions must address how it will serve the access and functional needs community in:

- Emergency communications;
- Emergency evacuations; and
- Emergency sheltering.

In keeping with its mission, the purpose of the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs is to identify the needs of individuals with disabilities and people with access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters and to integrate them into the State's emergency management system. The Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs utilizes a whole community approach by offering training and guidance to emergency managers and planners, disability advocates and other service providers responsible for planning for, responding to, and helping communities recover from disasters.

Part of any successful planning effort is to understand the impacted population(s). The legal requirements are set forth in Government Code section 8593.3, and define access and functional needs as individuals who _have_:

- Developmental, intellectual or physical disabilities;
- Chronic conditions or injuries;
- Limited English proficiency or non-English speaking;

Or, individuals who _are_:

- Older adults, children, or pregnant;
- Living in institutional settings;
- Low-income, homeless, and/or transportation disadvantaged; or
- From diverse cultures.

Lessons documented from years of assisting individuals with access and functional needs in disasters show three areas repeatedly identified as needing improvement: communications, evacuation, and sheltering.

Jurisdictions should partner with their local disability stakeholders to bring their plans in compliance with Government Code section 8593.3. Contact and locational information for local Independent Living Centers, Regional Centers, and other recommended stakeholders is readily available through the [Cal OES Access and Functional Needs Web Map](#).

Updated plans should also outline how the jurisdiction will address each of the following general areas and the particular access and functional needs-related considerations associated within each area:

<u>Emergency communications</u>

During a disaster, effective communication becomes especially critical. As such, information delivered at press conferences by public officials and broadcasted on television during a disaster needs to be effective, understood, consumable, and actionable by the whole community. Effective communication considerations include:

- Sign Language interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Alternative formats for individuals who are blind/low vision; and
- Translation services for persons with limited English proficiency or for non-English speaking individuals.

<u>Emergency evacuation</u>

When local evacuations become necessary, considerations for the whole community include:

- Accessible transportation options;
- Medical needs; and
- Keeping individuals connected with their families, personal care providers, essential equipment and technologies, and service animals.

Proper planning is essential to a successful evacuation and includes having agreements and partnerships in place with local public and private accessible transportation providers in order to ensure individuals with disabilities and persons with access and functional needs can evacuate safely during emergencies.

Emergency evacuation plans should be viewed as living documents because communities change and integrating the needs of individuals with access and functional needs is a dynamic process. Emergency managers should work and partner with their local disability and whole community stakeholders to regularly practice, review, revise, and update their plans to reflect changes in technology, personnel, and procedures.

Sheltering

Shelters can be stressful environments and may, without proper planning, exacerbate the physical and emotional impacts that survivors with access and functional needs experience during disasters.

Sheltering needs to be inclusive and integrated, not segregated. General population shelters need to be in physically accessible locations and equipped with accessible resources (e.g. bathrooms, cots, showers, etc.) to meet the needs of individuals with access and functional needs in a manner that ensures they can remain with their support systems (e.g. personal care provider, service animal, etc.). Assessing potential sheltering facilities before disasters occur is essential as designated shelters should comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Additional Resources

The Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs has made resources available to assist communities as they integrate access and functional needs within their emergency planning. Two such tools are:

The Cal OES Access and Functional Needs Web Map

To empower emergency managers to identify the access and functional needs-related assets and resources needed to support the health and independence of survivors, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs partnered with the Cal OES' GIS Division to create the California AFN Web Map – the first-ever searchable, comprehensive, statewide resource for locating AFN-related assets and resources in California.

Using data from the U.S. Census, the web map contains the following information for every county in the State of California:

- *Disability* - Total number of individuals in each county with a disability, listed into four categories: hearing difficulty; vision difficulty; cognitive difficulty; and ambulatory difficulty.
- *Culture* - The ethnicity and primary language(s) spoken at home within each county.
- *Age* - The age (across the life spectrum) of individuals in every county.

The web map outlines where each of the following resources are located:

- *Accessible Hygiene Resources* - Showers, toileting, and hand washing stations that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- *Accessible Transportation* - Organizations providing public transportation services to seniors and individuals with disabilities that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- *American Sign Language Interpreting Services* - Organizations providing interpretation services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- *Assistive Technology* - Organizations providing devices, equipment or technology systems, and services for individuals with disabilities.
- *Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) Programs* - Local programs that educate individuals about disaster preparedness and train them in basic disaster response skills.
- *Independent Living Centers* - Community-based, non-profit organizations designed and operated by individuals with disabilities.
- *Language Translation Services* - Organizations providing written text or interpretation services in a language other than English.
- *Regional Centers* - Non-profit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and support for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs Library

In order to ensure that community leaders, state agencies, advocacy organizations, emergency managers and others have the best and most current access and functional needs-related planning resources available in an easy to access, one-stop-shop central repository, we created the OAFN Library. The OAFN Library is a comprehensive clearinghouse for access and functional needs-specific best practices, guidance documents, videos, and more.

For additional questions regarding access and functional needs contact the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional needs at: OAFN@caloes.ca.gov