



## Rolling Perspective

*News from the Office of Access and Functional Needs*

December 2017

Issue 6

### Introduction

Welcome to *Rolling Perspective*, the quarterly newsletter by the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) aimed at keeping you informed and up to date on the work our office does. *Rolling Perspective* highlights our efforts to integrate access and functional needs (AFN) within the State's emergency management systems.

In this issue, we share our response and recovery efforts in support of the largest disaster in California history – the October 2017 Wildfires; we reflect on our integration efforts over the past year; share how our efforts are being recognized by state and national partners; and look ahead to what's coming in 2018!



Vance Taylor visits with FEMA's Disaster Survivor Assistance Team

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## Message from the Chief

2017 has been one for the record books! We've had atmospheric rivers, floods, a failed dam emergency spillway, mass evacuations, historic wildfires, freeze events, mudslides and minor earthquakes (just to keep things interesting). Those led to a slew of state and presidential declarations, an exorbitant amount of time being activated in the State Operations Center and a steady stream of field deployments.

I'm just one locust away from winning "Disaster Management Bingo!"

In activating for each disaster, I have had the unique opportunity to compare and contrast how affected jurisdictions responded to the access and functional needs of individuals within their communities. In doing so, I found that wherever local emergency managers have done the following – regardless of their size, economic standing or geographic location – their capability to save lives, reduce suffering, increase independence and promote health increases exponentially:

1. Establish relationships with local Independent Living Centers (ILCs);
2. Reassess the accessibility of their potential sheltering facilities; and
3. Integrate American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters within all press conferences.

In an environment of thinning budgets and ever-limited bandwidth, these are the things local emergency managers can do without spending exorbitant amounts of time or money that will yield monumentally significant results in their efforts to integrate access and functional needs. These items are tried, true and tested – implement them and leverage what integration can do to boost your emergency management capabilities!

## October 2017 Wildfires

On October 8, 2017, firefighters began battling multiple wildfires in numerous counties across Northern California, prompting massive evacuations and causing devastating consequences as strong winds fueled the fast-moving fires.

By the time the flames had been extinguished and the plumes of smoke had cleared, more than 11,000 firefighters and nearly 500 law enforcement personnel had worked the disaster; the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Shelter Task Force had coordinated over 40 sheltering operations; over 40,000 meals, 60,000 liters of water, 2,000 ADA compliant cots, 12,000 blankets and sheets had been distributed; more than 245,000 acres and 8,900 structures had burned; and 43 people died.



#### October 2017 Wildfire Destruction

Indeed, by virtually every metric we use, this was the worst disaster in state history. And while volumes can be written about the successes and challenges associated with the disaster, for purposes of this article, we will only call out one of each.

For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, getting timely and relevant information was extremely challenging. It started when local officials opted to forgo notifying the masses about the wildfires via the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) or the Emergency Alert System (EAS). That singular decision left thousands of deaf people unaware of the imminent danger they were in and instead of being woken up by their vibrating smartphones – which many had strategically placed beneath their pillows as they do every night – their phones laid still. And so it was that, as the fires raged, members of the deaf community slept – uniformed of the danger around them.

In the face of this immense challenge, staff from Cal OES' deaf and hard of hearing partner agencies were able to learn about the wildfires through friends, the television and the internet. As they did, these dedicated workers sprang into action by sending text messages to alert clients about the danger; they even drove into burn areas to wake people up and assist them with evacuation. Their actions continued through the night and their service continued through

the disaster and into the recovery. And because of these agencies – whom the Office of Access and Functional Needs proudly works with to run our Disaster Response Interpreter program – many lives within the deaf and hard of hearing community were saved.

The October wildfires illustrate that, for the communities we serve, the integration of access and functional needs is often the difference between life and death. Of the 43 individuals who perished, a great many had access and functional needs. This is the reality of what we experienced. And while we cannot change what happened, we can – and should – use the memory of this tragedy to recommit ourselves to integrating access and functional needs in a more meaningful way and to a more impacting degree.



October 2017 Wildfire Response Activities

## Reasonable Accommodation Hotline



Effective Communication Symbols

Cal OES and FEMA are committed to helping survivors with disabilities and access or functional needs who may need additional assistance during the recovery process. This may include help

completing an application, American Sign Language interpretation, language translation, receiving materials in large print or Braille, etc. For assistance, please call: (916) 361-0380. Individuals can also visit the [October Wildfires 2017 webpage](#) for updates on the current situation and additional recovery resources.

### **And the Award Goes To...**



Vance Taylor with California Department of Social Services, Director Will Lightbourne and the Disaster Services Bureau's Leadership Team

As we continue to integrate access and functional needs into the State's emergency plans, agency projects, guidance documents, training protocols and every facet of emergency management, our office and its leadership have been honored to receive a number of accolades this year including the following:

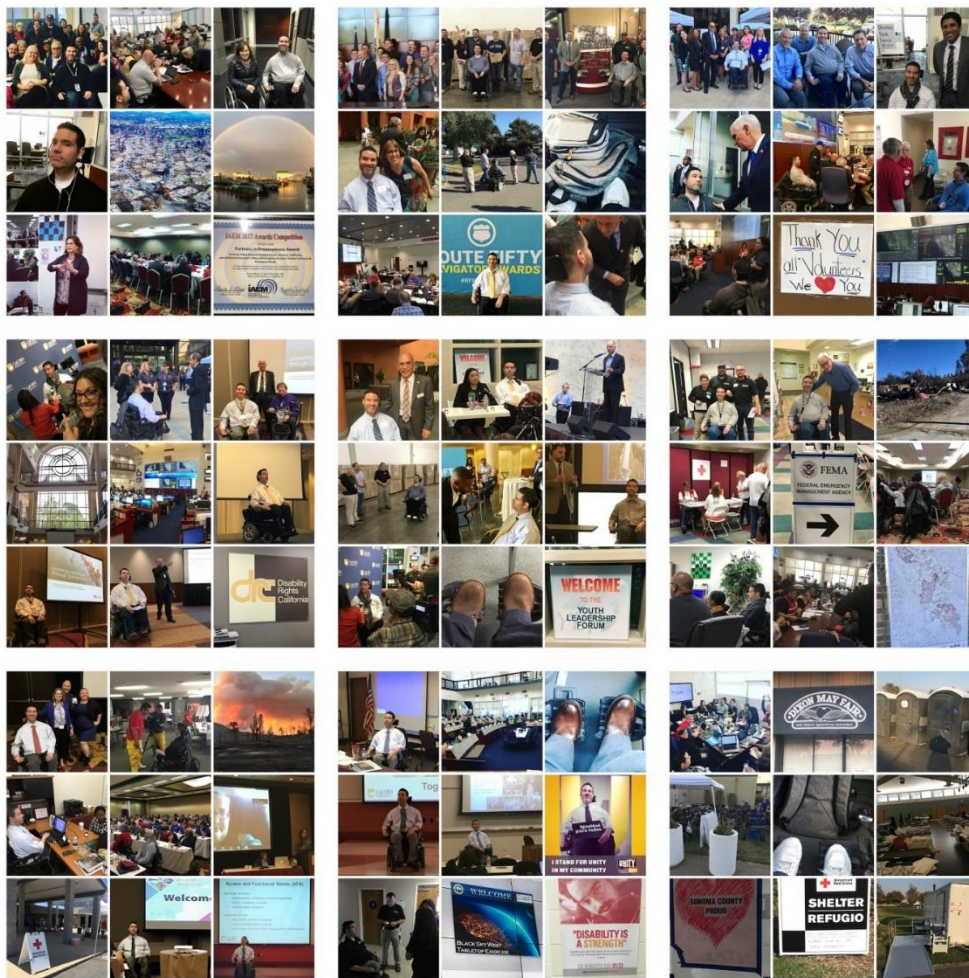
- The National Disability Employment Awareness Award from the California Department of Social Services;
- The USA Partners in Preparedness Award from the International Association of Emergency Managers; and
- The Navigator Award for Agency & Department Leadership from Route Fifty.

We at OAFN view these recognitions as a reflection on our partners and the wonderful work we are accomplishing together. Whether we are planning together during "Blue Sky" days, responding together to meet the needs of the whole community or working the recovery

process together following disasters; the true strength and value of what we do is accomplished in conjunction with our extraordinary partners. In that sense, these awards are a celebration of our combined achievements.

## A Look at What We've Done

It's been a busy 2017 for the OAFN team! We've enjoyed getting to engage with you throughout the year and appreciate the willingness of our partners to promote, include and integrate access and functional needs within all you do. Here's a quick photo summary of our many activities this year:



A photo collage of OAFN activities and engagements in 2017

## Looking Ahead to 2018

### Access and Functional Needs Web Map 2.0

Since the development of the [Access and Functional Needs Web Map](#) in mid-2015, OAFN has demonstrated the tool throughout the state and heard first-hand from emergency managers regarding how they are using the resource to better meet the needs of the whole community before, during and after disasters. As more jurisdictions have begun using the web map, OAFN has received useful feedback on ways to expand the product's offering. In an effort to utilize that feedback, we are in the process of working in partnership with the Cal OES Geographic Information Systems division to produce version 2.0 of the web map.



Content and features of the enhanced web map will include a tabbed journal layout, a situational awareness overview of current state events, real-time active emergency shelter information, updated Census data detailed by county and an expanded list of resources and assets grouped together by type in an easy to navigate format.

OAFN will continue to accept data from our stakeholders for inclusion in the update. Your data will continue to improve the capability of this important tool and will ensure it remains an effective and essential resource in supporting individuals with disabilities and people with access or functional needs in California.

Version 2.0 of the web map will go live early in 2018.

For questions regarding the web map or data submission, send us an email:

[OAFN@caloes.ca.gov](mailto:OAFN@caloes.ca.gov).

## Building Accessibility Improvements at HQ

OAFN collaborated with the Cal OES Logistics Management Directorate on projects aimed at improving the physical accessibility of our headquarters. A total of three projects will begin January 2018 with anticipated completion by summer 2018. These enhancements and modifications, which will improve access for our employees and visitors, include: installation of accessible door openers, parking lot upgrades, and updated building signage.

- **Project 1** - ADA Door Modification: To maintain current ADA and building code standards, Cal OES will install 13 new ADA compliant automatic door openers at Buildings A and B. The areas of installation identified by OAFN were: State Operations Center (SOC), Restrooms, Employee Hallway Entrance, Multi-Purpose Room (MPR 2), and the front Entrance and Exit doors.
- **Project 2** - Parking Lot Upgrades: Cal OES will resurface and repave the front and rear parking lots. This project includes repaving, re-striping and upgrading ADA compliant parking areas with new signage.

**Project 3** - Building Signage: Cal OES will update and add signage to meet new ADA compliance regulations, meeting room usage, and add directional signage for Buildings A and B.

## Disaster Response Interpreter Program – Video Project

OAFN in collaboration with Cal OES' Office of Crisis Communication & Public Affairs will produce an educational video about the Disaster Response Interpreter (DRI) Program. The DRI program certifies American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and provides for the deployment of those interpreters to press conferences and shelters, when requested, during the time of a declared emergency. The program's training is delivered in partnership with Cal OES, the American Red Cross, and NorCal Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The purpose of the video project will be twofold:

- To inform emergency managers and Public Information Officers about the DRI program; and
- To educate viewers (specifically broadcasters and emergency managers) that using certified interpreters on screen is the only way to ensure individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing that rely on American Sign Language as effective communication can receive timely, life-saving information before, during and after disasters.

The final video product will be posted on [OAFN's website](#).

## Subscribe

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