



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Rolling Perspective

News from the Office of Access and Functional Needs

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Introduction

Welcome to *Rolling Perspective*, the flagship 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. This edition of *Rolling Perspective* highlights OAFN's 10 year anniversary!

In this issue, we reflect on the milestones of our integration efforts over the past decade; share how our work is being recognized at the local, state and national levels; and look ahead to the future of integration.



OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor, presenting in Orange County about lessons learned from wildfires

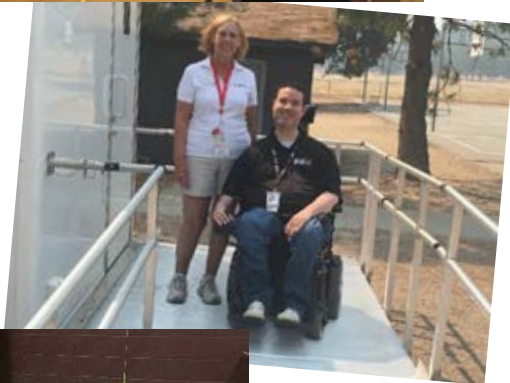
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Message from the Chief

OAFN Turns 10 – Where We Were, Where We Are, and Where We Go from Here...

In 2008, the Governor leaned forward to create the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN). A decade later, we've seen tremendous progress in integration and inclusion across the



emergency management landscape. This progress was evident when I deployed to Lake County this summer in response to the Mendocino Complex Fire, which is the largest wildfire in California state history. Sign language interpreters were integrated in the public messaging. Accessible cots were on scene. Signage was plentiful. Placard parking was in abundance. Considerations for specialized dietary considerations had been made. Disability stakeholders had been notified. Independent

Living Centers had teamed up with [Functional Assessment Service Teams](#) to ask every person at every single shelter if they had unmet needs. Wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and rollators had been provided by our partner agencies; and portable accessible shower units had been ordered and

installed in advance of the emergency declaration so they were ready for use at shelters when survivors with access and functional needs came through the doors.

Today, there's a continued commitment to integration from the Governor's Office, from every state agency, and from every local government jurisdiction. We work in tandem, side-by-side, in partnership with the whole community. There's a deep-seeded, personal

commitment on the part of emergency managers, first-responders, and stakeholders. And together we adopt, embrace, and strive to exemplify the mantra "nothing about us, without us."

With 10 years of experience behind us, the future of integration looks bright for OAFN, its partners, and all Californians. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

A Decade of Learning

After a decade of disaster activations, OAFN has 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, we found there are three things local emergency managers can do – regardless of the size, economic standing or geographic location of their jurisdiction – to increase the capability to save lives, reduce suffering, increase independence and promote the health of individuals with access and functional needs within their communities:

1. Establish a relationship with their local Independent Living Center (ILC);
2. Reassess the accessibility of their sheltering facilities; and
3. Integrate American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters within their 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.

The three articles below take a closer look at the benefits of these lessons learned.

Establish a relationship with the local Independent Living Center

Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are not places where people with disabilities go to live. ILCs are community-based, non-profit organizations designed and operated by individuals with disabilities. The ultimate goal of an ILC is to promote the independence of individuals with disabilities. There are 28 ILCs in California.



Cal OES Director, Mark S. Ghilarducci with California Foundation for Independent Living Centers Executive Director, Christina Mills; FREED Center for Independent Living Executive Director, Ana Acton; and OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor

Want to ensure people with disabilities are receiving life-saving emergency-related information? **Partner with your local ILC** and they'll push it out to consumers.

Want to know who needs assistance evacuating? **Partner with your local ILC** and they'll tell you which of their consumers have contacted them with transportation needs.

Want to know about unmet needs at shelters? **Partner with your local ILC** to assess shelters and determine the resources their consumers need. Often times they'll actually be able to provide durable medical equipment and assistive technology for consumers in shelter environments.

As emergency managers, we struggle to ensure we're addressing the access and functional needs of the whole community. We debate about the best way to inform, evacuate and shelter individuals with disabilities – often without ever realizing that the quickest, most efficient way to address those challenges is to **partner with your local ILC**.

ILCs can, in partnership with emergency managers, increase the independence of consumers before, during, and after emergencies.

Reassess the Accessibility of Sheltering Facilities

You can show local officials anywhere in the state a list of facilities in their jurisdiction designated as potential shelters – as outlined within the [National Shelter System \(NSS\)](#) – and guarantee they will be surprised. Stories about counties who look through NSS and report that some of the facilities listed as potential shelters are actually condemned buildings are not uncommon. Of the facilities that are potential shelters, many times, very little is known regarding their accessibility. While policy dictates every facility has to be assessed, unfortunately, a great many of the assessments are incomplete or out of date.

Thus, too often, officials select shelters based on poor or incomplete information. A decision is made to shelter at a particular location because, *"That's where we went last time."* Never mind that particular location may not offer much in terms of accessible resources, which means portable accessible showers, porta-potties, etc., may need to be located, procured, and deployed – all of which takes time and money.

An example of this issue was evident in a small town where one shelter, located at an elementary school, was overcrowded with people practically sleeping on top of each other. There was a shortage of accessible bathrooms, there were no accessible showers, and the campus was difficult to navigate in a wheelchair. Another shelter in the same town was opened at the high school. The high school had accessible bathrooms and 22 built-in accessible showers; it was a beautiful facility.



**NOW IS THE TIME FOR EVERY
COMMUNITY TO CONNECT
EMERGENCY MANAGERS AND
INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS**

The distance between the elementary school and the high school was three blocks.

Why then, with the high school being so close, was the elementary school being used? Because, *“That’s where we went last time.”* Instead of using a current assessment to make a fully informed decision, authorities had decided where to shelter based on historical experience.

We can do better.

For communities to be successful in sheltering, they need to reassess the facilities listed in NSS, determine which ones are legitimate sites, reassess them in terms of accessibility, and decide where to shelter accordingly.

Integrate American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters within all Press Events

Access to timely and relevant information is important to everyone – especially during emergencies. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, getting access to life-saving information during disasters can be difficult.

It’s something witnessed during the 2017 October wildfires in Northern California.

When officials decided against using the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system, thousands of deaf people in the area were left unaware of the imminent danger they were in. Instead of being woken up with an alert by their vibrating smartphones, their phones laid still. And so it was, as the fires raged, members of the deaf community slept.

Upon getting into their cars, a startling realization came over them – with flames in seemingly every direction; they didn’t know where to go for safety. Like their hearing counterparts, they pulled to the side of the road, took out their smartphones and started streaming press conferences to learn where they should go. However, with no ASL interpreters integrated into the initial press conferences; they had no way of receiving, processing or acting on the life-saving information everyone else was hearing.

In the face of this immense challenge, local deaf and hard of hearing partner agencies who learned about the wildfires, sprang into action by sending text messages to alert their clients about the danger; they even drove into burn areas to wake people up and assist them with evacuation. Their actions and service continued throughout that night and throughout the recovery process.

The importance of integrating ASL interpreters into every press conference cannot be overstated.

And the Award Goes To...

On September 26th, the California Emergency Services Association (CESA) presented OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor, with the Senator Nicholas C. Petris Award for outstanding service in the field of emergency management. The Petris Award is the highest honor bestowed by CESA. In his acceptance speech, Vance indicated that this recognition is a reflection on our partners and the valuable work we are accomplishing together. Vance emphasized that this award is absolutely a combined achievement.



Photo Collage of OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor receiving the Petris Award at the 2018 CESA Conference. Pictured with Cal OES Director, Mark S. Ghilarducci; CESA Member and Assistant Emergency Manager with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, Vicki Osbourn; and CESA President, Janice Bell.

We Succeed or Fail Together

OAFN recently had the privilege of presenting at George Washington University as part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) PrepTalk Symposium. PrepTalks are given by subject-matter experts and thought leaders to spread new ideas, spark conversation, and promote innovative leadership for the issues confronting emergency managers now and over the next 20 years.

In his PrepTalk, “We Succeed or Fail Together” OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor, explains the importance of understanding the communities we serve and the need to integrate people with access and functional needs within each phase of the emergency management process. This video can now be viewed at: <https://www.fema.gov/preptalks/taylor>.



OAFN Chief, Vance Taylor, presenting at George Washington University as part of FEMA’s PrepTalk Symposium

OAFN encourages you to watch and share the video via social media and email with colleagues, stakeholders, and members of the community.

Thank you for all you do to support integrating access and functional needs into every facet of the emergency management process. Without your collective efforts, OAFN simply could not do what we do.

The Updated Access and Functional Needs Web Map

In 2016, OAFN launched the [California Access and Functional Needs Web Map](#) – the first-ever definitive, comprehensive, statewide GIS-based tool specific for identifying access and functional needs assets and resources in California. Two years later, with a lot of input from local emergency managers, OAFN has updated the Web Map to better meet the needs of California’s whole community. Want to know how many people with a disability live in your county, outlined by type? Need assistance streamlining the procurement and deployment process for accessible resources? Interested in knowing the county by county population analysis of age, ethnicity, or languages spoken at home? All this and more can be found in the

updated Web Map. Using the Web Map, emergency managers can determine which populations are being (or will potentially be) impacted by a given disaster.

After visiting each of the counties, OAFN listened to feedback and applied content and features to enhance the web map, including 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/assets grouped together by type in an easy to navigate format.

This innovative tool provides layers of information in a user-friendly visual format. OAFN encourages continued input and data from our stakeholders to keep this tool accurate, complete, and up-to-date. Local data will improve the capability of this important tool and will ensure it remains an effective and essential resource for supporting the whole community.

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

OAFN@caloes.ca.gov.

The screenshot displays the 'California Access and Functional Needs Web Map' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Active Shelters', 'Potential Shelters', 'Cooling / Warming Centers', 'Census', 'Assets', 'Resources', 'CBET Programs', 'Health and Medical', and 'Cal OES Regional Contacts'. A welcome message on the left explains the tool's purpose: to assist emergency managers in identifying, locating, and deploying assets and functional needs (AFN) during emergencies. It lists categories of individuals who may have access and functional needs, such as physical disabilities, chronic conditions, limited English proficiency, older adults, children, and low-income/houseless individuals. The central map shows California with various markers, including a legend for 'Active Fires (Cal OES Tracked)' with categories like IV (Light), V (Moderate), VI (Strong), VII (Very Strong), VIII (Severe), and IX (Disaster). On the right, there is a 'LEGEND' section with 'Active Shelters' (Open icon) and 'Locations of Interest' (Care and Reception Center, Other AFN Services). Below that, 'Active Fires (Cal OES Tracked)' are listed with 'New Active' (purple flame icon) and 'Active Fire' (red flame icon).

Disaster Response Interpreter Program

OAFN's Disaster Response Interpreter (DRI) program certifies American Sign Language (ASL)



interpreters to provide services at shelters, town halls, press conferences and community events during emergencies and to standardize the practice of having on-screen ASL interpreting at all statewide press forums. The DRI course consists of modules designed to give interpreters an idea of what to expect in a high stress shelter situation, as well as what to expect during a statewide press conference. The DRI program description is available on the [OAFN website](#).

OAFN recently held DRI trainings in San Leandro and Riverside. For more information on DRI or to register for an upcoming course, email Linell Walker at: Linell.Walker@caloes.ca.gov.

Building Accessibility Improvements at HQ

OAFN has the opportunity to partner with stakeholders from across the state to advance the mission of integration. Usually this means traveling up and down California, however, sometimes we get to partner with internal agency stakeholders to advance whole community access. Such has been the case when collaborating with the Cal OES Logistics Management Directorate on projects aimed at improving the physical accessibility of our headquarters.

Despite an environment of thinning budgets and complex approval processes, our Logistics Management Directorate has pushed forward to promote, plan, and advance three projects that are making visiting and working at Cal OES much easier for individuals with disabilities.

Project #1: The Parking Lot

The Cal OES parking lot has been repaved, re-striped, and upgraded to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). New parking areas were added and new signage has been applied to both the front and rear lots.

Project #2: Interior Signage

Interior building signage has been added to meet new ADA compliance regulations, meeting room usage, and added directional signage for Buildings A and B.

Project #3: Door Modifications

The Logistics Management Directorate is on track to have 12 new ADA-compliant automatic door openers installed throughout the building. The areas of installation are in the State Operations Center (SOC), restrooms, the employee hallway entrance, the Multi-Purpose Room, and the front entrance and exit doors.

Thanks to our dynamic partners in the Disaster Logistics Planning & Coordination Team, your next visit to Cal OES Headquarters will be a more inclusive experience!



Vance with members of the Cal OES Logistic Management Directorate, from left to right: Jen Boras-Payton, Vance Taylor, Ron Williams and Jeanelle Bottlob

OAFN on the Move!

It's been a busy 2018 for the OAFN team! We've enjoyed getting to engage with you throughout the year and appreciate the willingness of all our partners to promote, include and integrate access and functional needs within all you do. Here's a quick photo summary of our many external activities this year:



Accessibility Services

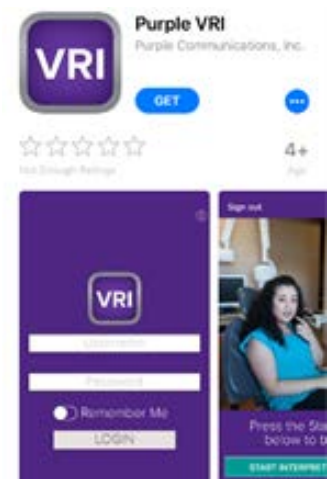
A key component in preparing and protecting the public is the ability to provide Californians with lifesaving information in a language or format that is accessible and understandable to the whole community. Access to timely and relevant information is important to everyone and critical to effectively relay information pertaining to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Regardless of what language is spoken at home or how someone accesses the internet, OAFN is reaching California's diverse populations in new and exciting ways.

The next three articles explain how we're striving to maintain a culture of continuous improvement in communicating with the whole community.

Video Remote Interpreting

Real-time information is critical to ensure disaster survivors know what's happening with their homes, businesses, and loved ones during emergencies. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, access to life-saving information is often very challenging. To address this issue, OAFN has partnered with Purple Communications to enable immediate, onsite, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services through smartphones.

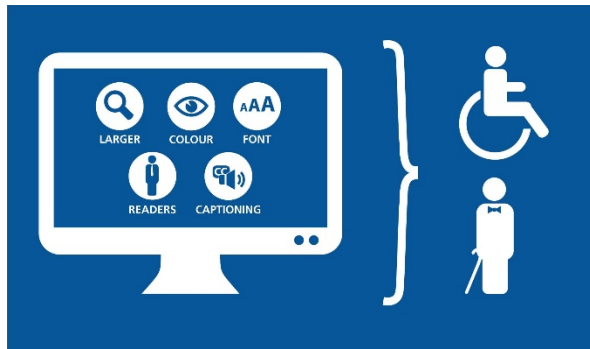
Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is an easy-to-use, convenient, on-demand ASL interpreting service delivered over a live internet video connection via your smartphone, PC or tablet. VRI uses video conferencing technology equipment and an internet connection to connect qualified interpreters at a call center to people at a different locations. VRI is an effective tool emergency managers and shelter staff can use to bridge the communication gaps experienced by survivors in need of ASL services. OAFN utilized this technology during the Carr Fire in Shasta County and the Mendicino Complex Fire.



Electronic Document Accessible Reading

Nearly a million Californians are blind or have low vision and many of them use software called a "screen reader" to translate visual information from their computers into a verbal narrative. For screen readers to be effective, the documents within a given website must be in accessible formats. This is especially important when delivering life-saving guidance and educational documents to the public.

Cal OES is coordinating with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to deliver document accessibility classes for the agency's web content managers (i.e. staff who create, review or post electronic content). The information taught in these classes is specific to the accessibility



features within the Microsoft and Adobe software. OAFN has hosted seven classes already and is moving forward with scheduling additional classes to promote Cal OES' strategic goal to develop a united and innovative workforce that is trained, experienced, knowledgeable, and ready to adapt and respond. These trainings provide expert, specialized, competent services to ensure up-to-date legal compliance and help meet the needs of the whole community.

For more information on document accessibility, visit [DOR's Accessible Documents webpage](#).

World Language Access

Information delivered at shelters, town halls, press conferences by public officials, community events during emergencies and broadcasted on television during disasters is critical. This information needs to be understood, consumable, and actionable by the whole community, including the estimated 7 million Californians for whom English is not their primary language.

To address this issue, Cal OES has executed a contract to provide translation services for foreign language translators and transcription. This new resource provides the agency with language solutions to include Tagalog, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese, Korean, Farsi, Armenian, Russian, Arabic, Khmer or Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Japanese, French, German, Cambodian, and Spanish to minimize or eliminate language barriers during disasters.



An Inside Look

It's been a busy 2018 for the OAFN team. We worked diligently to integrate access and functional needs into the emergency plans, projects, guidance documents, training protocols and every facet of the state's emergency management process. Together with our partners we are working to make a difference for the whole community. One team, one fight!



A photo collage of events taking place at Cal OES

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