

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

August 18, 2026

Welcome!

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor, Chief, Office of Access and Functional Needs at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

All,

This has been a monumental summer, filled with incidents, events, and opportunities that have forced us to stretch and grow. California has confronted wildfires, warehouse fires, extreme heat, hazardous-material incidents, and major events like the FIFA World Cup.

At the same time, we are preparing for emerging threats, including cyberattacks and AI-enabled incidents that can disrupt power, communications, transportation, healthcare, and other systems people depend on every day.

For individuals with access and functional needs, those consequences can be especially significant. As we navigate these challenges, we must continually ask: Can people receive and understand emergency information? Can they evacuate safely? Are transportation, sheltering, and services accessible? Can people maintain access to power, durable medical equipment, and other essential supports?

That is the breadth and depth of our work.

As emergency managers, we must adapt, evolve, and grow alongside the threats we face. As we build new capabilities and prepare for emerging risks, inclusive emergency management must remain at the core of what we build.

Whatever we face, our success depends on strong relationships, resilient systems, and a commitment to ensuring they work for everyone.

Because we all do better when we all do better.

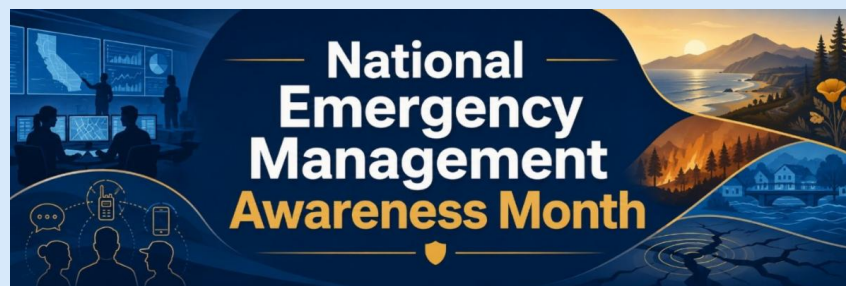
Thank you for your role in this life-saving mission.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

Chief, Office of Access and Functional Needs
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

National Emergency Management Awareness Month



Banner reading "National Emergency Management Awareness Month" surrounded by illustrations of emergency response personnel, communication icons, and natural disasters

August is National Emergency Management Awareness Month, an opportunity to recognize the people who help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

Emergency management brings together a wide range of disciplines and expertise, from planning, operations, logistics, communications, and public information to cybersecurity, recovery, mitigation, and access and functional needs.

Within that larger mission, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) works to ensure the considerations of all individuals are integrated throughout emergency planning and operations. Through training, guidance, technical assistance, and partnerships, OAFN helps communities strengthen accessibility across alerts and warnings, evacuation, transportation, sheltering, and other essential services.

This month, we celebrate the emergency management professionals and partners who bring their skills, experience, and commitment to this work every day.

Want to meet some of the people behind the mission? Check out the [I Am Cal OES video series](#) to learn about their roles and the work they do.

Make Water Safety Part of the Fun



Life preserver floating beside the words "Water Safety"

Summer is a great time to enjoy California's pools, lakes, rivers, and beaches. A little planning can help make those experiences safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

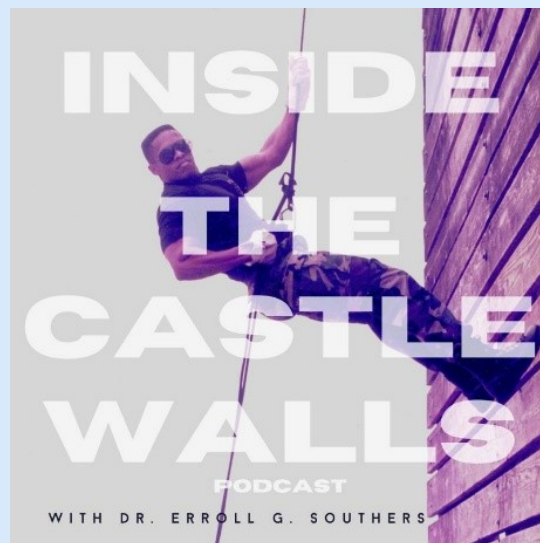
People can have different water-safety needs related to mobility, communication, seizures, or intellectual and developmental disabilities. Some people on the autism spectrum may be strongly drawn to water or wander from safe locations, making added precautions especially important.

A few simple layers of protection can make a big difference:

- Designate an adult to actively watch the water without distractions.
- Use properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets.
- Secure pools with fencing, locked gates, and alarms.
- Choose swim instruction that meets the individual's abilities and needs.
- Use clear instructions, visual supports, or other appropriate communication tools.
- Have a safety plan for anyone at risk of wandering
- Learn CPR and basic water-rescue skills.

Water recreation should be safe, accessible, and enjoyable for everyone. Planning for individual needs helps reduce risk while supporting independence and participation.

Visit the California Department of Developmental Services' [Water Safety for ALL Californians](#) webpage for drowning-prevention information, multilingual materials, and additional resources.



Inside the Castle Walls Podcast Cover

Check out the *Inside the Castle Walls Podcast* episode where Dr. Erroll G. Southers interviews L. Vance Taylor about his personal and professional journey, leadership, and resilience. Watch the episode, [Vance Taylor: Achieving Dreams through Resilience and Leadership](#).

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