

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

December 11, 2025

Welcome!

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor pictured with partners, friends, and members of the disability community.

All,
As we wrap up the year, I want to thank our partners, advocates, local leaders, community-based organizations, and every reader of

the AFN Minute for your continued commitment to inclusive emergency management. Everything we accomplished this year was made possible because of your support and collaboration.

In 2025, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) strengthened partnerships, expanded training, and provided critical support during major disasters. During the Los Angeles wildfires, our team worked alongside local, state, and federal emergency managers and community-based organizations to identify unmet needs, support accessible evacuations, and ensure Local Assistance Centers and Disaster Recovery Centers were inclusive and served the whole community.

Throughout the summer, we maintained enhanced watch posture staffing to support wildfire, heat, and power-related incidents and ensure rapid assistance when needed.

We continued to advance whole community recovery by hosting recovery workshops and expanding the AFN Library with new guidance on evacuation, transportation, mass care, accessible communication, and personal preparedness. We also supported inclusive planning statewide through the 4th Annual National Access and Functional Needs Symposium and provided AFN Consultations to help local jurisdictions strengthen Emergency Operations Plans and improve communication access. Together, these achievements reflect strong preparedness, meaningful collaboration, and a shared commitment to ensuring accessibility before, during, and after disasters.

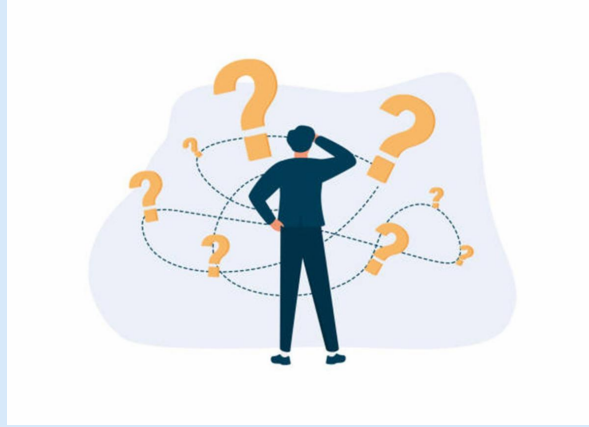
Thank you for your partnership and for the trust you place in our work. We look forward to building an even stronger and more inclusive California in the year ahead.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

New Accessibility Decision-Making Tool Will Support Inclusive Emergency Operations



A person facing multiple question marks, illustrating the choices and decisions they must make.

Emergency managers make countless decisions under pressure. Ensuring accessibility is one of the most important responsibilities they carry, yet it is often one of the most complex and time-sensitive. To support this work, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) is developing a new decision-making tool that will help local emergency managers integrate accessibility into every stage of the emergency management process before, during, and after disasters.

The tool will translate accessibility best practices into clear, step-by-step decision trees designed for real-world operations. Each decision tree will focus on a specific accessibility topic and outline practical actions, available resources, and the legislative requirements that must be considered. This structure gives emergency managers a straightforward way to review their options, identify the most inclusive pathways, and make informed choices in the moment.

The guidance will cover six core areas of emergency management: planning, communication, evacuation, transportation, sheltering, and recovery. Each area will include decision trees that highlight essential accessibility considerations and guide users through effective and inclusive approaches.

To make the tool even easier to use, OAFN is also developing a digital dashboard. This dashboard will serve as an online version of the paper tool and will allow users to navigate each section quickly, access key actions, and follow links to additional guidance. The digital layout will help emergency managers find what they need at a glance while still offering the option to dive deeper into detailed decision trees.

Both the dashboard and the full decision-making tool are scheduled for completion by Q2 2026. Once released, they will offer emergency managers a powerful and practical resource for

Staying Connected and Feeling Supported



A row of paper cutouts of people holding hands, conveying themes of community, connection, and support

California offers many resources to support individuals with access and functional needs and their families stay connected, safe, and healthy. Whether you are looking for tools to build an emergency plan, strengthen your evacuation system, expand your disaster support network, or access emotional support, practical assistance, or programs that promote independence, these services are here for you.

Below are a few trusted resources available to help you get started:

[Disability Disaster Access and Resources \(DDAR\) Program](#)

The DDAR Program helps individuals with access and functional needs prepare for and safely navigate Public Safety Power Shutoff events and other emergencies. Eligible individuals who rely on electricity for medical or independent living needs may receive backup power solutions, transportation support, emergency planning assistance, and referrals to additional community resources.

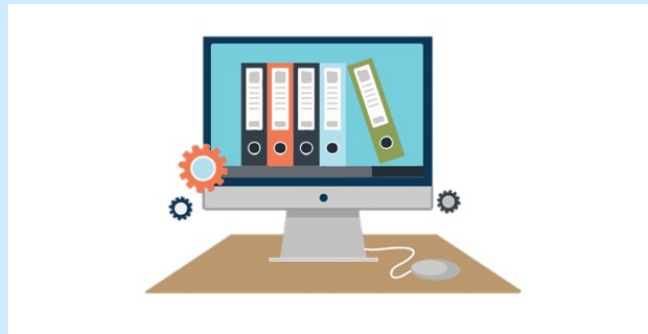
[Call 211 for Essential Community Services | United Way 211](#)

By dialing 211, Californians can quickly access a wide range of services. These include securing disaster information, shelter resources, caregiving support, and guidance on putting together an emergency plan. Operators can help connect callers to local programs that support evacuation readiness, emergency alerts, and expanding a personal disaster support network.

[Friendship Line - Institute on Aging](#)

The Friendship Line is a toll free, confidential support line for older adults and caregivers who may be feeling isolated, overwhelmed, or at risk during stressful or emergency situations. Trained volunteers provide emotional support, crisis intervention, and wellness check ins that can be especially important during disasters or periods of heightened concern. The service helps callers stay connected, grounded, and safer when challenges arise.
Call anytime: (888) 670-1360.

Together, these programs help individuals with access and functional needs stay informed, prepared, and connected to their communities. Please share these resources with anyone who may benefit so we can continue building a stronger, more resilient California for all.



A desktop computer with books on the screen to represent an online library.

Not to toot our own horn, but the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) maintains the largest clearinghouse of AFN-specific guides, tools, resources, and best practices on the internet. Access the [AFN Library](#) today to begin strengthening your personal preparedness, supporting your organization, or enhancing your community's emergency planning efforts.

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