

# The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

February 21, 2024

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## Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor and the Cal OES team meeting in the California State Operations Center while activated in response to 2024 Winter Storms.

All,

We are only two months into the new year and California has already felt the effects of multiple weather-related events. Recognizing the disproportionate impacts these events have on the whole community, Cal OES's Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) continues to lead the mission of inclusive emergency management before, during, and after all disasters. To expand the State's capabilities of assisting and empowering underserved communities, California has also established a new best practice of standing up its Priority Populations Task Force during activations.

The Priority Populations Task Force, which was originally stood up in

response to the 2023 Winter Storms, is co-chaired by Cal OES and the California Health and Human Services Agency. The Priority Populations Task Force focuses on: Individuals who are experiencing homelessness; Individuals with visible and non-visible disabilities; Older adults; Individuals residing in medical and non-medical congregate facilities; and individuals from the farmworker community.

The purpose of the Task Force is to bring California's departments/agencies together to coordinate state resources, to identify and address unmet needs, to close gaps, to and ensure comprehensive operational preparedness and response in support of individuals at greatest risk for negative outcomes during events.

California's approach to whole community preparedness, response, and recovery will continue to evolve. As it does, we will continue to share lessons learned and best practices with emergency managers and community partners everywhere.

Thank you for joining us on this life-changing, and lifesaving, mission!

-Vance

**L. Vance Taylor**

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

## 2024 Winter Storm Activations

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A flooded freeway in San Diego during the late January/early February Winter Storms.

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On January 31, 2024, and again on February 19, 2024, the California State Operations Center (SOC) activated at Level 3 to assist communities in support of Winter Storms. To facilitate inclusive, whole community-focused response operations, the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) deployed staff to the California State

Operations Center.

OAFN coordinated with emergency managers, local jurisdictions, and community partners to promote preparedness, provide weather-related threat briefings, secure American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to ensure effective communication, and to amplify accessible storm-related messaging.

As weather conditions worsened and power outages, flash flooding, and storm debris began impacting individuals throughout the state, OAFN partnered with power providers to monitor outages, address medical baseline impacts, and support the distribution of mitigation resources for energy-dependent Californians.

Throughout the event, OAFN participated with the Cal OES Advance Planning team to support the development of inclusive deliverables encompassing the needs of Californians at greatest risk for negative outcomes associated with the storms; worked closely with community-based organizations to empower individuals with access and functional considerations to create personal preparedness and evacuation plans, sign up for local emergency alerts, and check-in with their support networks; and coordinated daily with the Cal OES Statewide Access and Functional Needs Community Advisory Committee to identify and address unmet needs.

## Disability Disaster Access and Resource (DDAR) Program



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Disability Disaster Access and Resources (DDAR) Logo

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Launched in April 2020, the Disability Disaster Access and Resources (DDAR) program, which is funded through Investor-Owned Utilities, provides power-related mitigation resources to energy-dependent Californians.

Administered through the California Foundation for Independent Living

Centers (CFILC), the DDAR program was created to assist individuals utilizing electricity-powered medical equipment, assistive devices, and technology in high-fire threat districts by providing mitigation resources, such as backup batteries, free accessible transportation, and hotel vouchers before, during, and after Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. However, the program has grown to provide support during all types of emergencies and disasters that trigger power outages.

Other benefits of the DDAR program include cooperation from local Independent Living Centers to:

- Support personal emergency preparedness efforts;
- Assist with enrollment in Medical Baseline and local emergency alert programs;
- Train on a series of disaster-related topics; and
- Assess individual power-related needs before, during, and after disasters.

Find the location of your local [Disability Disaster Access & Resource Center](#) here.

Individuals can apply for services on the DDAR website here: [disabilitydisasteraccess.org](https://disabilitydisasteraccess.org)

## Earthquake Mitigation Kits

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In partnership with the Cal OES Seismic Hazards Branch, the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC), the Earthquake Country Alliance (ECA), and Team Rubicon, the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) facilitated an innovative pilot project that provided earthquake mitigation kits to harden the homes of consumers with disabilities in each region of the state.

This Earthquake Mitigation Program, known as the Independent Living center (ILC) Mini Awards, allowed OAFN and ECA to provide free earthquake mitigation equipment to ILC offices and consumer homes. Equipment provided included bookshelf and appliance straps, cabinet latches, quake hold putty, and gas shut-off wrenches.

Below are a few testimonies from individuals with disabilities who participated in the program:

*“As an older person with significant physical limitations, I am eternally grateful for this program. I now*



*don't have to worry about being crushed by heavy furnishings. My family lives hundreds of miles from me so I was unable to get my home more secured and ready for when the 'big one' hits. I feel so much safer in my home now!"*

*-Cynde*

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Cynde posing with the now secured furnishings.

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*"Thanks to Cal OES and Team Rubicon for securing my office cabinet. My home office is where I do my advocacy work for the disability community. If there is an earthquake event while I am working, I might get trapped without the cabinet being secured. Thank you for keeping me safe."*

*-Carrie*



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Carrie in front of the newly secured dresser.

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*"I'm so grateful for the hardware securing our 100-year-old family portrait of my*



*grandma to the wall. Now an earthquake won't shatter this priceless piece of family history."*

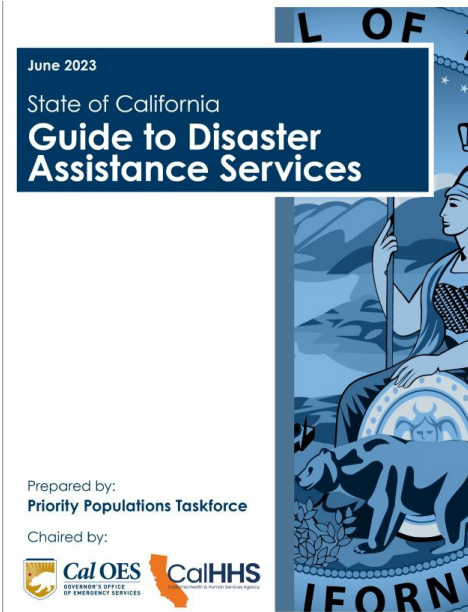
*-Kristy*

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Kristy posing with her 100-year-old portrait that is now secured.

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Due to the success of the project, OAFN and its partners will facilitate the ILC Mini Award program again!



The cover of the State of California Guide to Disaster Assistance Services resource.

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Check out the [State of California Guide to Disaster Assistance Services](#)

This resource provides both disaster and non-disaster-related information regarding federal, state, and local assistance services available in California. This document is also available in [Spanish](#).

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