



The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

January 15, 2026

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor in front of a mural of the California State Capitol

All,

As we begin a new year, I'm energized by the work ahead and deeply proud of the progress we continue to make together.

The mission of inclusive, emergency management is not static. The risks we face evolve, communities change, and expectations rightly grow. To meet this moment, we must continue to learn, adapt, and push our systems forward. That means constantly improving how we plan, train, communicate, and operate so emergency management truly works for everyone.

In 2026, we are focused on moving the mission forward in practical, meaningful ways. This includes expanding and refining training, strengthening guidance, improving tools, and maintaining operational readiness. Just as important, it means listening, engaging, and learning from partners across the state.

I'm especially excited about the opportunities ahead to work alongside jurisdictions, community-based organizations, advocates, and individuals throughout California. Our strongest solutions come from collaboration. By engaging directly with those doing the work on the ground and those most impacted by emergencies, we build systems that are more responsive, more inclusive, and more resilient.

In 2026, we will continue to show up. We will continue to support local and regional partners, provide technical assistance, and be ready to support State Operations Center activations when disasters occur. At the same time, we will keep challenging ourselves to grow, evolve, and raise the bar for what inclusive emergency management looks like.

Thank you for your partnership, your leadership, and your commitment to this work. I look forward to continuing this journey with you in the year ahead.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

Looking Ahead in 2026: New Guidance, Training, and Engagement



A road headed towards mountains with the words 'Looking ahead'

Key Lines of Effort for 2026

In 2026, the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) is advancing several key initiatives designed to support inclusive emergency management across California and beyond. These efforts focus on expanding practical resources, improving situational awareness, and providing tools that support informed decision-making.

1. Accessible Social Media Training

One resource OAFN is looking forward to providing this year is a new training course focused on creating accessible social media content during emergencies.

The course, which builds on the **Accessible Social Media Guide** released last year, will offer practical guidance on creating online content that works for everyone. The course, which is expected to be available near the end of Q1, will address creating clear posts, using image descriptions, formatting content for screen readers, and improving reach to people with disabilities. The new course will translate guidance into applied instruction, helping emergency managers and public information staff develop the technical capability and know-how needed to implement accessible practices across commonly used social media platforms.

The course is being designed for emergency managers, public information officers, and communications staff, but will be made available to all partners inside, and outside, of California. It will emphasize real-world application. Participants will receive step-by-step instruction, examples, and tools they can use immediately in their day-to-day work.

The course will be offered **free of charge** on a **monthly basis**, making it broadly accessible to all.

2. Enhancements to the AFN Web Map

Another key effort in 2026 is the continued enhancement of the **AFN Web Map**, an interactive, public-facing mapping tool developed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services to support inclusive emergency response and recovery. The purpose of the map is simple but critical: to help emergency managers, partners, and communities quickly identify resources, facilities, and services that support people with access and functional needs during disasters.

Planned updates will expand functionality and strengthen the map's value as both a planning and operational tool. Enhancements will include automatic, real-time data feeds that populate current shelter information, improving situational awareness and decision-making during response operations.

The map will also expand its identification of resources by incorporating information on a broader range of licensed care facilities, extending beyond current capabilities. These additions are intended to support stronger planning, coordination, and response efforts, particularly for populations that rely on regulated care settings.

Together, these improvements will make the AFN Web Map more dynamic, reliable, and useful for local, regional, and state partners.

3. Additional Guidance and Decision-Support Tools

OAFN is continuing the development of additional guidance and decision-support tools intended to empower inclusive planning, response, and recovery.

This work includes further development of the decision-support tool highlighted in **last month's AFN Minute**, which is designed to help emergency managers systematically consider access and functional needs when making operational and planning decisions. The tool is intended to be flexible and usable across a range of scenarios, helping practitioners ask the right questions, identify gaps, and select appropriate strategies without adding unnecessary complexity. In addition to the decision-support tool, OAFN is developing and refining other guidance products that address common challenges identified by partners.

These resources are being designed to complement existing emergency management frameworks and to integrate smoothly into current planning processes, training programs, and operational workflows.

As these tools are completed, OAFN will share updates, release supporting materials, and provide technical assistance to support adoption and implementation. The goal is to ensure partners not only have access to guidance, but also understand how to apply it in practical, real-world contexts.



Community Emergency Response Team Logo.

Want to help your community during disasters? Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) train volunteers in basic preparedness and response skills to provide local assistance when help may be delayed. To learn more, visit [CERT](#).

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