

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

July 30, 2024

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor delivering the keynote address at the 2024 National Sports Safety and Security Conference

All,

Recognizing that even the most well-resourced jurisdictions have a limited capacity to address some individual or concurrent disasters; the need to utilize non-traditional partners as force multipliers in support of emergency management efforts cannot be overstated. This is also true at the state level, where emergency management responsibilities are shared and stretch beyond any one single agency or department.

Serving the needs of all Californians requires an all-hands-on-deck approach that brings everyone together. For example, when

responding to extreme heat events, Public Safety Power Shutoffs, and wildfires this summer, state agencies and departments have exemplified this model of inclusion through the activities of the Priority Populations Task Force (PPTF).

Co-chaired by Cal OES and the California Health and Human Services Agency, the PPTF activates through the State Operations Center in response to large incidents and events. In total, over 20 state agencies/departments participate as active members of the PPTF with the mission of coordinating state resources, identifying and addressing unmet needs, closing gaps, and ensuring comprehensive operational preparedness and response in support of Californians at greatest risk.

No single group, entity, or organization can always successfully marshal all the resources needed to support the whole community. To promote the safety and security of all individuals, including those with access and functional needs, we must bring community-based organizations, faith-based groups, local leaders, advocates, and all those willing to engage in this life-saving mission together.

Be it through a Task Force, an AFN Advisory Committee, or some other mechanism – our communities do better when we push forward together.

Here's to supporting one another, seeking out non-traditional partners, and advancing inclusive emergency management together.

Thank you for your work and all you do!

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

AFN-Specific CERT Training



Working in close coordination with partners throughout Cal OES, local jurisdictions, and the community, the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) has developed an AFN-specific training module for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers.

The new training module, which is the most comprehensive of its kind for CERT volunteers, is designed to highlight the benefits of inclusion and integration of the access and functional needs community throughout the emergency management cycle.

Throughout the module, CERT volunteers will gain an enhanced understanding of:

- The disproportionate impact disasters have on individuals with access and functional needs.
- How the whole community approach to emergency planning, which includes an AFN Advisory Committee, improves outcomes for everyone before, during, and after a disaster.
- The importance of the CERT volunteer's role in supporting the safety of individuals with access and functional needs.
- The value of becoming a CERT volunteer.
- How sharing lived experiences with access and functional needs benefits the whole team.

The module will be piloted with selected California CERT teams this summer, then integrated throughout the training programs of all 450 state CERT teams. The module will also be made available nationally to promote a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization.

With over 450 programs in California alone, CERT trains volunteers in basic response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT volunteers also educate their communities on personal preparedness at outreach events.

For more information about CERT, please visit [Cal OES/Community Emergency Response Team](#).

Successful Completion of the 3rd Annual National AFN Symposium





COLORADO
Division of Homeland Security
& Emergency Management
Department of Public Safety

Logos for the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the International Association of Emergency Managers, the Colorado Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, and New York University

The 2024 National Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Symposium was held virtually on July 11 and 12, drawing over 2,700 registered attendees. The event brought together the disability community, emergency managers, disaster planners, and first responders from across the country in an online forum designed to foster trust and understanding.

Advancing the mission of addressing access and functional needs nationwide, the Symposium showcased forward-leaning, inclusive, and innovative practices in emergency management from across the nation. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about the latest strategies and best practices for planning with the community to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals with access and functional needs before, during, and after emergencies.

The Symposium was organized by Cal OES, the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (CDHSEM), and New York University (NYU).

This free event included American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, Spanish language translation, and captioning in both English and Spanish. The American Red Cross and Big City Emergency Managers (BCEM) sponsored the event.

A post-event package including videos, transcripts, and resources links from the Symposium will be sent to all registrants.



The California ISO Flex Alert Logo

Weather events and wildfires can disrupt the electrical supply needed to power medical devices and assistive technologies. [Sign up](#) for [Flex Alerts](#) and check out this [Fact Sheet](#) about Energy Emergency Alerts (EEA) to learn how to stay informed and be prepared.

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