

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

June 15, 2026

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Message from the Chief



5th Annual National Access and Functional Needs Symposium Banner

All,

If you haven't already registered for the **5th Annual National Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Symposium**, I encourage you to do so today.

Whether you work in planning, operations, communications, logistics, public health, recovery, mitigation, or community engagement, this free, virtual event will provide valuable information and perspectives relevant to your work. This year's Symposium will be held July 7-8, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time. I'm also pleased to share that Cal OES Director Caroline Thomas Jacobs will provide a keynote address during the event.

I hope you will join us and invite your colleagues and partners to do the same. Together, we can continue advancing emergency management practices that strengthen preparedness, improve outcomes, and ensure the community is fully integrated in disaster planning and response.

Don't miss out, use [this link to register today!](#)

Thank you.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

Chief, Office of Access and Functional Needs

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

OAFN Supports Accessible Sheltering During Garden Grove Hazardous Materials Incident



Members of the California Department of Social Services, Functional Assessment Service Teams (FAST), American Red Cross, and Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) at a shelter during the Garden Grove hazmat event

In May 2026, a hazardous materials emergency at a Garden Grove aerospace facility prompted evacuation orders affecting approximately 50,000 residents across Orange County. As local, state, and federal agencies worked to address the threat posed by an unstable tank containing methyl methacrylate, emergency shelters were opened to support displaced community members.

To help ensure shelter operations were accessible and inclusive, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) deployed staff to Southern California in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the state agency responsible for mass care and sheltering. Working alongside CDSS Functional Assessment Service Teams (FAST), the American Red Cross, and local shelter operators, OAFN staff helped assess shelter accessibility, identify barriers, and implement solutions to support individuals with disabilities and people with access and functional needs.

Throughout the incident, OAFN and FAST worked directly with shelter residents to identify disability-related and functional needs, coordinate accommodations, and connect individuals with resources and support services. This collaborative effort helped ensure shelters were both physically and programmatically accessible, allowing evacuees to maintain their health, safety, and independence throughout the emergency.

The response highlighted the importance of integrating access and functional needs expertise into shelter operations and demonstrated the value of strong partnerships among Cal OES, CDSS, local jurisdictions, community-based organizations, and shelter operators.

When agencies work together to identify and address access and functional needs, the entire community is better positioned to respond, recover, and thrive.

Registration Reopens for OAFN's Free Accessible Document Training Series



Aerial view of a computer user completing forms online

The Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) is pleased to announce the reopening of registration for its Accessible Document Training Series. Previously offered through the California State Training Institute (CSTI), these courses are now coordinated directly by OAFN, allowing participants to register through our office while continuing to receive the same high-quality training.

In emergency management, critical information is only effective if people can access it. These practical, hands-on courses teach participants how to create accessible documents using Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat, helping ensure plans, public information materials, and other resources are usable by individuals with disabilities and people with access and functional needs. Best of all, the courses are **free of charge** and open to emergency managers, government agencies, disability partners, and community-based organizations within and outside of California.

The training series includes:

- [How to Create Accessible Microsoft Office Documents](#)
- [How to Create Accessible PDF Documents](#)
- [How to Create Accessible Forms](#)

Participants are encouraged to take the courses in the order listed, as each serves as a prerequisite for the next. Space may be limited, so early registration is encouraged.

Accessibility is not an add-on to emergency management, it is fundamental to ensuring the whole community can prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.



SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles

With FIFA World Cup 2026 events bringing large crowds to California, it's a great time for emergency managers, venue operators, and public safety partners to revisit the [Integrating AFN Considerations within Large Venues](#) guidance document.

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