

# The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

May 9, 2025

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## Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor presenting to partners in Berkeley, CA.

All,

As we move deeper into Wildfire Preparedness Month, I want to take a moment to reflect on the importance of planning, readiness, and community.

Wildfires can strike quickly and unpredictably, putting lives, homes, and communities at risk. That's why now is the time to act. Preparedness isn't just a personal responsibility—it's a shared commitment to ensuring the safety and resilience of everyone in our communities, especially individuals with access and functional needs who may require additional support in an emergency.

This month, I encourage everyone to do the following:

- Review and update your evacuation plans.
- Build a go-kit with essential supplies.
- Connect with your support networks.
- Check in on neighbors who might need help.
- Ensure personal plans are tailored, communicated, and ready to activate.

Inclusive emergency management means thinking ahead and planning *with*, not *for*, individuals with disabilities, chronic conditions, language or transportation barriers, and other access needs. It means building a culture of preparedness that leaves no one behind.

Wildfires can impact everyone, but they disproportionately impact people with access and functional considerations. To be effective, our preparedness efforts must be intentional and inclusive.

Thank you for your continued commitment to safety, community, and resilience. Let's get ready—together.

-Vance

**L. Vance Taylor**

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

**Lessons Learned: Preparedness is Powerful**



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Wildfire survivors embracing in front of a destroyed home.

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Wildfires are a sobering reminder of how rapidly emergencies can unfold and how deeply they can affect our communities. In just a matter of hours, neighborhoods can be forced to evacuate, homes can be lost, and lives can be disrupted.

For people with access and functional needs, wildfire events underscore the importance of having a plan that addresses individual unique circumstances. Emergencies can magnify existing challenges—whether related to mobility, communication, medical care, or transportation. That's why taking proactive steps now can make a life-saving difference.

Four Ways to Prepare:

- **[Build a support network](#):** Talk with friends, family, neighbors, and caregivers about how they can assist during an emergency. Make sure they're familiar with your plan and practice it together.
- **[Customize your go-bag](#):** In addition to basic insupplies, clude items specific to your needs—such prescription medications, adaptive equipment chargers, hearing aids, or written instructions for care.
- **[Plan your evacuation](#):** Learn about accessible evacuation routes and services in your area. Local emergency management offices can help you identify transportation options and accessible shelters.

- [Stay informed](#): Sign up for emergency alerts through your county or city. Choose notification systems that accommodate your communication preferences, such as text, voice, or visual formats.

While we can't control when or where wildfires strike, we can control how we prepare. By planning ahead and staying connected with our communities, the whole community can reduce risk and increase resilience.

Let's continue building a culture of preparedness that includes everyone.

## Plain Language Active Shooter Guidance



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CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

### PLAIN LANGUAGE ACTIVE SHOOTER GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

How We "Run, Hide, and Fight!"

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An image showing the cover page of the "Plain Language Active Shooter Guide for People with Disabilities" document.

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The [California State Council on Developmental Disabilities \(SCDD\)](#) developed a *Plain Language Active Shooter Guide* to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and respond to active shooter emergencies. This important resource was created to ensure that everyone has access to life-saving information presented in a way that is easy to understand.

Using clear, straightforward language and helpful visuals, the guide breaks down what to do if there is an immediate threat nearby. It is designed with accessibility in mind, making critical safety guidance easier to follow for individuals with intellectual, developmental, or sensory disabilities.

The guide includes vital safety tips such as:

- How to recognize the signs of an active shooter situation
- What to do to stay safe – including the “Run, Hide, Fight” strategy, when applicable
- How to create a personal safety plan in advance
- How to effectively communicate with first responders during an emergency

In addition to general safety steps, the guide offers practical advice tailored for people who may face additional challenges in emergencies, such as individuals who:

- Use wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Are deaf or hard of hearing
- Are blind or have low vision
- May need assistance understanding and following emergency instructions

The goal of the guide is simple, but critical: to empower people with disabilities with the knowledge and tools they need to protect themselves in high-stress, dangerous situations.

To view or download the guide, visit the [Plain Language Active Shooter Guide](#).





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Blocks spelling out the word "resources."

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There are many valuable resources available to help individuals prepare for wildfires. Below are some helpful links to support your personal planning efforts:

- [\*Listos California\*](#)
- [\*Let's Get Prepared Guide\*](#)
- [\*Building a Fire-Ready Future\*](#)

[\*SUBSCRIBE / AFN LIBRARY\*](#)

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