

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

May 14, 2026

Welcome!

If this was emailed directly to you, great news, you are already on our distribution list! If not please, [subscribe here](#) or use the button at the bottom of this email to be added to our mailing list.

Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor with Aaron Carruthers, Christina Mills, and Carly Pacheco at the California 211 Disaster Ready Conference

All,

I'm very proud and excited to announce the 2026 National Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Symposium!

This year marks the fifth year we've hosted the Symposium, and it's incredible to see how much it has grown. When we first envisioned the Symposium, we honestly weren't sure how much national interest there would be. Each year, however, participation and engagement have continued to expand beyond anything we imagined. Last year alone, the Symposium drew more than 2,500 registrants from across the country.

Registration is now open for this year's Symposium, which will take place virtually on Tuesday, July 7, and Wednesday, July 8, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. PT. As we celebrate this five-year milestone, we're excited to continue building one of the nation's leading conversations focused on inclusive emergency management and whole-community integration.

Hosted in partnership by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (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 year's Symposium will once again bring together emergency managers, disability leaders, community-based organizations, government agencies, and whole-community partners from across the nation.

The two-day virtual event will highlight strategies, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to advancing access and functional needs integration across preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts.

We encourage all emergency managers and community partners to register now using the following link: [2026 National AFN Symposium Registration](#)

Thank you.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

Get Ready for Extreme Heat



Silhouette of a person drinking water from a bottle on a hot day

As temperatures continue to rise across California, it is important to prepare for extreme heat before it becomes dangerous. Heat-related illnesses can develop quickly and may have more serious impacts on

individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with access and functional needs.

Planning ahead can help you stay safe, healthy, and connected during extreme heat events. Taking a few simple steps now can make a big difference when temperatures climb.

Start by identifying nearby **cooling centers** and accessible transportation options in your community. It is also important to review your medications with your healthcare provider or pharmacist to understand whether heat may affect you differently or increase your risk.

You can also **prepare an emergency kit** that includes water, medications, medical supplies, backup chargers, and copies of important documents. In addition, stay informed by regularly checking your local **heat risk and air quality** conditions, especially during heat waves or prolonged hot weather.

Knowing the **warning signs of heat-related illness** is also essential. Symptoms may include: Muscle cramping, unusually heavy sweating, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, weakness, or nausea

Heat emergencies are largely preventable with preparation, awareness, and community support. By planning ahead and checking in on one another, we can help ensure everyone stays safe during extreme heat events.

Prepare for Upcoming PSPS Events



Power transmission lines

As temperatures continue to rise and the risk of strong winds and wildfires increases across California, communities throughout the state may experience **Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS)** events.

While these temporary power outages are implemented by utility providers with the intention of supporting public safety, they can create significant challenges for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and anyone with access and functional needs. Loss of power can impact the use of durable medical equipment, refrigeration for medications, charging for mobility devices, internet and communication access, cooling systems, and other critical supports that help individuals maintain their health, safety, and independence.

For some individuals with access and functional needs, even a short-term outage can quickly become a serious health and safety concern. Taking a few preparedness steps ahead of time can help support safety, communication, and continuity of care during PSPS events.

Preparedness steps may include:

- Signing up for **emergency alerts** and **utility provider PSPS notifications**
- Enrolling in utility **Medical Baseline programs**, when eligible
- **Creating a support plan** with family members, neighbors, and care providers

Community-based organizations such as Independent Living Centers, 211, and emergency management partners also play an important role in helping support individuals with access and functional needs before, during, and after PSPS events.

Programs such as the **Disability Disaster Access and Resources (DDAR) Program** can also serve as essential resources before, during, and after PSPS events by helping connect individuals to preparedness support, backup batteries, accessible transportation, food assistance, hotel stays, and other critical services.

Individuals are also encouraged to visit **PrepareForPowerDown.com** for preparedness information, PSPS resources, Medical Baseline information, emergency planning tools, and links to local support services. The website was developed in partnership with California utilities, emergency management, and partners from the access and functional needs community to help Californians better prepare for PSPS events and power outages.

Remember, the time to prepare is now.



HeatReadyCA.com Logo

Are you Heat Ready? Heat is deadlier than any other weather hazard.
Visit [People with Disabilities | HeatReadyCA.com](#) to learn heat
readiness tips.

SUBSCRIBE / AFN LIBRARY

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services | 3650 Schriever Ave. | Mather, CA 95655 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!