

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

May 9, 2023

Welcome!

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A photo of Vance Taylor during a visit to a Red Cross Shelter



Message from the Chief

California has experienced record-breaking storms requiring unparalleled response and recovery efforts. Recognizing the disproportionate impacts these weather events have on individuals with access and functional needs, Cal OES has, and continues to, integrate whole community-related considerations throughout each phase of the State's emergency management process.

Understanding California's unique and dynamic risk landscape – we remain partnered with community stakeholders to implore people to register for state and federal assistance where possible and to prepare for future disasters, including wildfire season, which is just around the corner.

Utilizing trusted partnerships with community-based organizations, such as local Independent Living Centers, Area Agencies on Aging, Regional Centers, and others, enables us to get accessible, life-saving information to individuals with access and functional needs throughout the state.

Read below to learn more about our preparedness, response, and recovery operations so that, together, we can build a more inclusive and resilient California.

Thank you.

L. Vance Taylor

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

2023 Winter Storms Response

Photo of floodwaters surround homes and vehicles in the community of Pajaro in Monterey County, CA



As multiple rounds of historic rain and snow damaged and flooded roads, homes, and communities – forcing tens of thousands to evacuate and cutting power to millions – the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) activated and maintained a 24/7 posture within the State Operations Center to ensure the needs of all impacted individuals were addressed in inclusive, accessible, and equitable ways.

OAFN coordinated with the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers' (CFILC) Disability Disaster Access and Resources (DDAR) program to provide energy-dependent Californians with emergency backup batteries, free accessible transportation services, free hotel vouchers, gas cards, and other key resources throughout the storms.

OAFN connected emergency coordinators from the California Department of Developmental Services (CDDS) with the Cal OES

Coastal, Inland, and Southern, teams to address resource requests from families served by Regional Centers in need of items such as preparedness kits, propane, heating services, sandbags, transportation assistance, evaluation services, and life-saving resources.

OAFN has, and continues to, work with local emergency coordinators and recovery teams to assist families and individuals with access and functional needs throughout impacted areas with debris removal. Together, teams helped remove downed trees so people with medical needs could evacuate their homes to seek treatment and attention. Teams also worked to coordinate with PG&E to address the needs of energy-dependent residents, including the mobilization of crews to remove downed power lines from household entryways and property lines.

OAFN will continue to promote preparedness, provide language services, coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies, and do all we can to serve California's whole community.



Photo of crews removing piles of snow in the San Bernardino Mountains in Crestline, California.

Preparing for Future Storms



Being prepared is more important than ever. Here are some ways you can prepare for upcoming weather-related storms, events, and disasters:

Sign Up for Emergency Alerts

In an emergency, you need to know what's going on. To make the right decisions, you need reliable, up-to-the-minute information on disasters in your area. You need to know what to do and when.

Know what disasters and hazards could affect your area, how to get emergency alerts, and where to go if you need to evacuate. Make sure you have a plan and practice it regularly.

Go to [CalAlerts.org](https://www.calalerts.org) and sign up for free emergency alerts.

Prepare for Loss of Power

All power-related events have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities, older adults, and anyone who depends on power for Assistive Technologies/Devices and/or Durable Medical Equipment.

Conserve energy where possible, charge equipment early in the day, and activate friends, family, and care providers to be ready to assist as needed should power service be interrupted.

Ask yourself:

1. Which of my devices rely on power?
2. Do I have backup battery power?
3. Do I have a charger for all of my devices?
4. Can I locate charging stations?

Make an Evacuation Plan

Depending on your access or functional need, you may need assistance evacuating safely before, during, or after emergencies. As you develop a personal evacuation plan, be sure to coordinate with friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors, and others in your support network you can contact for help during an evacuation. Discuss your disaster plans with your support network and, as appropriate, include them in your planning process.

A few things to keep in mind include:

- Always follow the guidance of local authorities. If they say you have to leave, evacuate immediately.
- If you need extra time or support to leave, consider evacuating early. Learn different evacuation routes to leave your community.
- Make a contact list of 5 people you can count on to help you evacuate safely. Keep their phone numbers and email addresses where you can access them.
- Pack a Go-bag you can take with you when evacuating. Your bag should include enough food and water for several days, medications, emergency supplies, contact information, and important documents you may need.

For more preparedness tools and resources, please visit
www.listoscalifornia.org.

Be sure to check out "[Feeling Safe, Being Safe](#)." This webpage includes links to several foundational videos, publications, and presentations about personal emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities. You can also view this webpage, and much more, at the [Cal OES AFN Library](#).

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