

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

November 14, 2025

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor pictured with Suzanne Frew and Claudine Jaenichen at the 2025 Bay Area UASI Public Safety Preparedness Summit

All,

This year's Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) Public Safety Preparedness Summit provided an important opportunity to discuss where we are headed as a state when it comes to whole community planning. I joined the Summit to speak about the work our office is leading, the tools we have recently released, and our commitment to serving individuals with disabilities and people with access and functional needs (AFN).

I highlighted new resources now available to jurisdictions, such as the [Cal OES Integrating Accessible Social Media Guide](#) that supports accessible communication and stronger AFN integration across all phases of emergency management. The tool offers practical steps for creating accessible social media content and improving public information. Resources like this reflect our priority of meeting communities where they are and providing clear, actionable guidance that supports real world needs.

I also addressed the broader environment we are operating in. Across the country, there is growing debate around inclusive emergency management and the role of integration in public safety. Here in California, our commitment to protecting and advancing accessibility remains strong. The state continues to provide national leadership, developing resources that are increasingly used by jurisdictions across the country. Our mission does not change because the national conversation shifts. If anything, it becomes even more important.

My message at the Summit was simple. The work of accessibility continues. The need remains. And California is moving forward with clarity and purpose. We will continue to support jurisdictions, uplift community partners, and ensure that every person has the information, resources, and support needed to stay safe, healthy, and independent before, during, and after disasters.

Thank you for your partnership!

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

Staying Safe During Severe Weather



Warning sign with a cloud and lightning bolt with the text "Storm Warning" written beneath it

As we move into winter, storms can bring heavy rain, lightning, strong winds, and sudden flooding. For people who use power mobility devices, medical equipment, or assistive technology, it is normal to feel nervous when severe weather approaches. The good news is there are straightforward, proactive things you can do to be safe.

Stay Informed

Keep track of local weather forecasts and sign up for emergency alerts. Getting information early gives you time to charge devices, gather supplies, and get indoors before conditions become dangerous. [Sign up for emergency alerts](#).

Staying Safe Indoors

If you hear thunder, go inside a sturdy building. Once indoors, stay away from windows and avoid using devices that are plugged into the wall. It is also safer to avoid sinks and showers because lightning can travel through plumbing. If you use powered medical or mobility equipment, make sure backup batteries are charged and within reach.

If You Are Outside

Try to get into a building or a hard topped vehicle as soon as possible. Avoid open areas, trees, and metal surfaces like ramps or fences. If you cannot reach shelter right away, choose the safest nearby spot and wait for the storm to pass. Plan ahead with individuals in your support network so everyone knows where to go during severe weather.

Watch for Flooding

Storms can cause fast moving flash floods. If you see rising water, move to higher ground immediately. Never walk, roll, or drive through floodwater. It can hide debris, dips in the pavement, or live electrical wires.

Prepare Ahead

Keep medications and documents in a waterproof container. Charge your phone, mobility devices, and medical equipment before storms arrive. Share your plan with someone you trust, and connect with your utility provider if you rely on electricity for medical needs.

With the right information and planning, you can stay safe, confident, and independent during severe weather.

California Pre-Positions Emergency Resources Ahead of Winter Weather



A Cal OES Disaster Logistics trailer

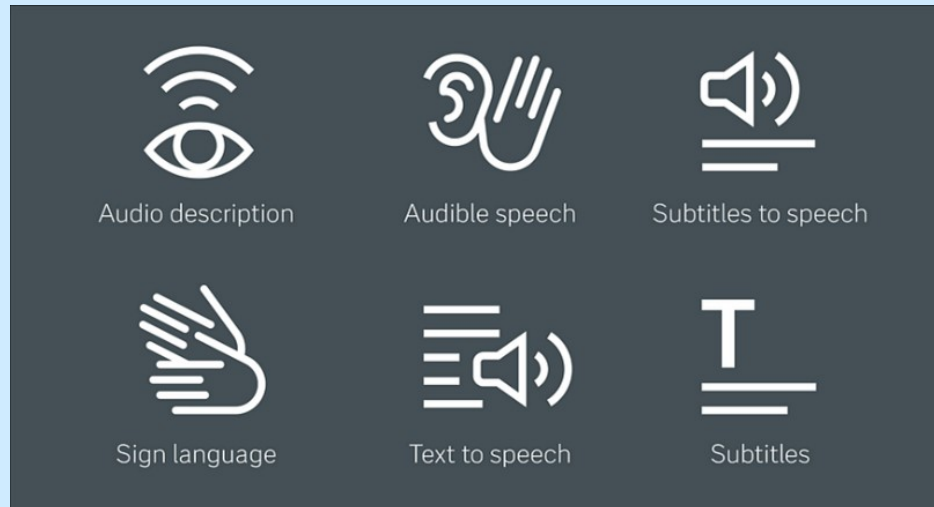
As California enters the cooler, wetter months, the state is taking important steps to prepare for the impacts of winter storms. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) is working to protect communities by pre-positioning emergency resources in areas that may face heavy rain, flooding, strong winds, or debris flows. These preparations are especially important for individuals with disabilities or access and functional considerations who may need stable power, accessible resources, or timely emergency assistance.

Cal OES has staged disaster supplies and emergency equipment, including water, fire engines, and rescue resources, in strategic locations across the state. Many of these sites are near recent burn scars and regions that are more likely to flood. By placing equipment and trained personnel closer to high-risk areas, the state can respond more quickly and better support individuals and families, including anyone who may require assistance before, during, or after emergencies.

Specialized emergency crews have also been pre-deployed to counties at higher risk of storm impacts. This includes teams and fire engines positioned in advance so they can begin supporting communities immediately if conditions worsen. These actions reflect the state's ongoing commitment to protecting all Californians.

Cal OES encourages everyone to sign up for local emergency alerts, stay aware of changing weather conditions, and make sure personal emergency plans are up to date. The state's readiness efforts, combined with your own preparation at home, help ensure you can stay safe, supported, and informed throughout the winter

storm season.



A collection of effective communication icons

Clear, accessible communication helps everyone stay informed during disasters. Learn more about how to provide effective communication for people with disabilities by visiting: [Effective Communication](#)

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