

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

October 14, 2026

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Message from the Chief



Cal OES Director Caroline Thomas Jacobs with L. Vance Taylor and members of the OAFN team

All,
Effective emergency management requires us to look beyond individual programs and consider how access and functional needs (AFN) are integrated throughout our planning, operations, and decision-making. Inclusion cannot be an afterthought or the responsibility of a single person or team. It must be part of how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

To support this work, the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) is introducing the [AFN Digital Integration Toolkit](#), a resource designed to help emergency managers, planners, and whole-community partners incorporate access and functional needs into emergency management.

The goal is straightforward, make access and functional needs integration a practical, consistent part of the work we do every day. This new toolkit will help strengthen planning, identify potential barriers, and build systems that better serve communities before, during, and after disasters.

The AFN Digital Integration Toolkit is available on the [OAFN webpage](#). I encourage emergency managers and planners to explore the toolkit, share it with your partners, and put it to work in your planning and preparedness efforts.

Inclusive emergency management is not a separate mission. It is fundamental to our success.

Thank you for your continued commitment to this life-saving work.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

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

Prepare for the Great California ShakeOut with MyShake



Instructions to "Drop, Cover, Hold On" and "Lock, Cover, Hold On" during an earthquake

Earthquakes can happen without warning, making preparation essential. The [MyShake](#) app, developed through a partnership between Cal OES, UC Berkeley, and the U.S. Geological Survey provides earthquake early warning alerts that can give people valuable seconds to take protective action before shaking arrives. The free app also offers earthquake information and preparedness resources.

On **October 15**, Californians will have an opportunity to practice their earthquake response during the [Great California ShakeOut](#), an annual earthquake preparedness drill. MyShake will participate by sending a drill alert to app users in California, Oregon, and Washington. Depending on the region, the alert will be sent **between 10:14 and 10:16 AM**.

For individuals with access and functional needs, preparedness includes considering how to receive emergency alerts and what actions are practical for everybody's circumstances. Reviewing emergency plans, identifying necessary supports, and practicing protective actions ahead of time can help people respond more effectively when an earthquake occurs.

When the drill alert arrives, practice the appropriate protective action: Drop, Cover, and Hold On, or Lock, Cover, and Hold On for individuals who use mobility assistance devices. OAFN encourages everyone to participate and make earthquake preparedness part of the planning routine.

For more information and resources on earthquake preparedness, visit [California's Earthquake Warning website](#).

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



Banner indicating "National Disability Employment Awareness Month" showing people with different disabilities

October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**, a time to recognize the contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace and highlight the importance of creating inclusive employment opportunities. For the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN), it is also an opportunity to recognize the important role people with disabilities play in building resilient communities.

People with disabilities bring a wide range of skills, experiences, and perspectives to the workforce. In emergency management, those perspectives are especially valuable in helping organizations identify barriers and develop solutions that better serve people with access and functional needs.

Inclusion starts with recognizing that people with disabilities are not simply recipients of emergency services, they are essential partners in preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience.

Creating accessible workplaces and employment opportunities benefits everyone. Accessible communication, technology, facilities, and workplace practices ensure that all employees can contribute their skills and participate fully in the work around them.

This National Disability Employment Awareness Month, OAFN encourages emergency managers, employers, and community partners to consider how they can strengthen inclusion in their workplaces and emergency management programs. By ensuring people with disabilities have opportunities to contribute, we build stronger teams and more resilient communities.



Social media icons, including Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest

Due to overwhelming popularity, OAFN has added additional deliveries of the **Creating Accessible Social Media Content within Emergency Management training course** in October, November, and December.
Register today!

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