



**INTEGRATED EVACUATION PLANNING FOR  
JURISDICTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS AND  
FUNCTIONAL NEEDS**

**CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**



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## Executive Summary

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and its Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) work closely with community stakeholders to identify and integrate the needs of all Californians, including individuals with access and functional needs (AFN), within the State's emergency management systems.

The term "access and functional needs" refers to individuals with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, chronic conditions, injuries, limited English proficiency or who are non-English speaking; older adults; children; people living in institutionalized settings, or those who are low-income, homeless, pregnant or transportation disadvantaged, including, but not limited to, those who are dependent on public transportation or are pregnant.

Historically, access and functional needs-related considerations have not been fully integrated within local Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs). In conjunction with the fact that individuals with access and functional needs are disproportionately impacted by disasters, the lack of integrated planning created gaps, which led to measurable loss of life and increased human suffering among the whole community. Significant amongst those gaps was an overall lack of specific emergency evacuation-related considerations individuals with access and functional needs face before, during, and after disasters. To help close those gaps, California enacted laws requiring jurisdictions to integrate access and functional needs-related considerations throughout their respective EOPs, including the evacuation section.

This document is intended to provide local jurisdictions with the guidance, best practices, and informational resources needed to strengthen their plans for the successful evacuation of individuals with access and functional needs in disasters. It includes tools jurisdictions can use to provide integrated evacuation operations to all members of the community, including individuals with access and functional needs, in collaboration with partners such as transportation providers.

Finally, this document compiles resources that individuals with access and functional needs can use to develop personal evacuation plans to enhance their own safety, security, and health prior to, and during, disasters.

## Preface

Natural and human-caused disasters have become more frequent, far-reaching, and widespread. As a result, preserving the lives, security, and prosperity of all members of society has become increasingly complex. Jurisdictions must plan for, and respond to, these complexities using inclusive, integrated processes that build community resilience. Doing so requires cooperation from all members of the community. It is also critical that individuals proactively plan and take responsibility for enhancing their personal levels of preparedness.

When emergency managers work with community members to develop the collective capacity needed to enhance resilience during a disaster, everyone, including individuals with access and functional needs, is better prepared.

This resource highlights inclusive practices and procedures jurisdictions and individuals should implement for successful evacuation operations before, during, and after emergencies.

## Introduction

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to empower local jurisdictions and individuals with access and functional needs to develop comprehensive and inclusive emergency evacuation plans that benefit the whole community.

### Background

The evacuation plans and systems jurisdictions have traditionally designed, were developed by, and for, individuals who can walk and run. People with limited mobility or other access and functional needs have not typically been included in the planning process. The lack of inclusive planning created fundamental gaps in the ways many jurisdictions have addressed the issue of emergency evacuation with regard to the whole community. Understanding the needs of,

and planning with, the access and functional needs community is essential for developing inclusive and successful evacuation plans and operations.

## Disability Integration Mandates

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 specifically require equal access for people with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to, programs and activities conducted or funded by the federal, state, or local governments. Inclusive evacuation planning needs to be calibrated to align with equal access requirements.

Courts have interpreted the ADA to require jurisdictions to:

- Integrate access and functional needs stakeholders in the emergency management planning process
- Incorporate considerations for individuals with access and functional needs in emergency planning for power outages, earthquakes, and wildfires
- Use accessible alerting strategies
- Provide accessible emergency evacuation transportation resources

California Assembly Bill 2311 (Brown, Chapter 520, Statutes of 2016) enacted Government Code section 8593.3, requires jurisdictions, upon the next update of their EOP, to integrate access and functional needs-related considerations into specific sections, including the evacuation/transportation section.

California Assembly Bill 477 (Cervantes, Chapter 218, Statutes of 2019), which amended California Government Code section 8593.3, requires each county to ensure they are planning *with* the community, instead of *for* the community, by requiring jurisdictions to include representatives from access and functional needs populations within the next regular update to their EOP. This means ensuring individuals with access and functional needs are involved in each phase of the plan development process.

The overall purpose of A.B. 2311 and A.B. 477 is to ensure emergency managers and planners integrate whole community considerations, stakeholders, and partners as they develop their EOPs as a means to address access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters.



## Section 1: Inclusive Planning Best Practices

Jurisdictions should develop their evacuation plans in close partnership with whole community stakeholders. Cal OES recommends each jurisdiction develop an official Access and Functional Need (AFN) Advisory Committee, which includes whole community representatives affiliated with non-government agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs) serving individuals with access and functional needs, disability organizations, community advocates, and people with lived access and functional needs experience. Using an inclusive process ensures jurisdictions are planning with, not for, the community and results in the development of better products and stakeholder buy-in.

### AFN Advisory Committee Involvement in the Development Process

Jurisdictions should engage their AFN Advisory Committee throughout the planning development cycle, not just on the back end for final review and comment. Taking the time to explain, collaborate, and solicit critical feedback throughout the entire planning process will yield better outcomes for the whole community.

Jurisdictions should engage with their **AFN Advisory Committee** throughout the evacuation planning process.

Additional benefits of inclusive planning include:

- Reduced loss of life and suffering before, during, and after disasters
- Increased understanding of jurisdictional dynamics and demographics
- Empowering the community's capability to assist throughout the disaster cycle
- Building relationships of trust between emergency managers and the community
- Advancing and promoting greater personal preparedness

When plans consider and incorporate the views, perspectives, and feedback of the individuals and organizations they are designed for, stakeholders are more likely to accept and use them. An inclusive planning process also builds relationships and operating patterns that can be utilized during an emergency.

## Communication During Evacuation Operations

### *Planning*

As part of the evacuation plan, emergency managers, service providers, and individuals within the community need to understand the process that has been established to secure accessible transportation resources to evacuate during disasters. This process needs to be clear and consistent and should be circulated throughout the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the community, as well as amongst partners.

Communication plans should ensure the prompt, consistent delivery of effective evacuation-related information.

Jurisdictions should use their AFN Advisory Committee to broaden, enhance, and validate communication, evacuation, and transportation strategies.

As jurisdictions are socializing, operationalizing, and providing information about their evacuation plans before and during disasters, they need to use accessible messaging and communication.

### *Communicating the Evacuation Plan*

To ensure the community knows how to access transportation resources, jurisdictions should use a broad variety of accessible communication methods, including:

- Social media posts
- Emergency alerts, warnings, and notifications
- Press conferences
- Town halls
- Digital billboards/message signs

To ensure the evacuation-related information jurisdictions put out can be understood and utilized by the whole community, the following accessibility considerations need to be built into messaging:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Plain, clear, and concise language
- Multiple languages
- 508 Compliance
- Alt text, color contrast, reading order, and headings
- Accessible graphic design and layout considerations

### *Disaster Registries*

Some local jurisdictions build their evacuation plans around local disaster registries. The concept of a voluntary disaster registry is simple – a list of individuals who need additional support during emergencies, which the government can use to provide assistance when disaster strikes. However, it is important to note that registries often give registrants a false sense of security; they believe that because they are on a list, they will receive additional resources or priority response services during emergencies. This false assumption is dangerous and can lead to an overall decrease in personal disaster preparedness.

Registries give registrants a **false sense of confidence** that because they are on a list, they will receive additional resources or priority response services during emergencies.

To address these misunderstandings, local governments should explicitly state that disasters often overwhelm emergency resources and registrants may not receive help or assistance for multiple hours or days, if at all.

A registry is not a means to dispatch physical resources during an emergency. Registries are tools to provide registrants with disaster-related information via telephonic notification or personal visits. As such, registrants should continue their personal and familial disaster preparedness efforts.

Even if jurisdictions have a disaster registry in place, they should never believe their evacuation planning is complete because they have one.

## Transportation and Evacuation Operations with AFN Considerations

Meeting the transportation needs of individuals with access and functional needs during large-scale evacuations requires significant advanced planning. It is essential for jurisdictions to understand that not everyone in the community will have accessible and/or reliable transportation and that many people will require transportation resources to get to safety. Jurisdictions should take those realities into consideration throughout the planning process.

Jurisdictions need to establish a **contract** with each of their local service providers.

Jurisdictions must plan in advance to establish successful evacuation processes for individuals with access and functional needs who are being transported from their homes, apartments, schools, neighborhoods, and medical or nursing facilities. While many facilities will have their own plans in place, jurisdictions are responsible for ensuring everyone can access emergency evacuation transportation resources. Jurisdictions should also address community areas with limited public transportation options and examine how individuals with disabilities and people with access and functional needs will access accessible transit resources.

### *Identifying Transportation Resources*

During disasters, many people will require emergency transportation to evacuate safely. To ensure emergency transportation services are provided in a timely manner, jurisdictions should establish a contract with each of their local service providers, including paratransit agencies.

During large-scale disasters, it is likely more people will require emergency evacuation assistance than there are available transportation assets in a given area. To address this issue, and build surge capacity, jurisdictions should also enter into agreements with transportation providers in surrounding areas to use their resources when needed.

Non-profits, community-based organizations, and members of a jurisdiction's AFN Advisory Committee can greatly assist emergency planners in identifying accessible transportation resources throughout a given area (e.g., paratransit, community partner vehicles, shuttles, buses). Community partners can also

identify strategies to integrate and obtain transportation resources for use during emergency evacuations.

### *Identifying Transportation Providers*

When identifying potential transportation providers to partner with, jurisdictions should be innovative and think beyond traditional resources. Examples of potential transportation partners include:

Hotel Shuttles	Adult Day Health Care (ADHC)	Tour Companies	Healthcare Centers
Amusement Parks	Area Agencies on Aging	Senior Centers	School District Transportation Systems
Recreation Centers	Airport Shuttle Buses	Airport Rental Cars	Disability Service Providers
Casino Shuttles	Independent Living Centers	Regional Centers	Taxi Services
Tour Bus Companies	County Fairgrounds Shuttles	Private Ride Share Companies	Churches/Religious Institutions

## **Contracts with Transportation Providers**

### *Intra-Jurisdictional Contracts*

The importance of establishing contracts with transportation providers within a jurisdiction cannot be overstated. Contracts are crucial for successful evacuation and should address:

- Roles/Responsibilities – Clearly define roles (i.e., who provides evacuation assistance)
- Activation – Determine who is activated, when, and by whom
- Assets – Determine how many, and what type, of assets are available
- Response Time – Estimate the time needed to respond
- Liability – Determine how liability coverage works

Contracts should clearly state that emergency evacuation services will be provided 24/7 via on demand taxi-like service, at no cost to the user, and that resources will include accessible transportation assets.

Jurisdictions should maintain a list of all transportation/evacuation contracts in the Emergency Operations Center.

## Contracts with Surrounding Jurisdictions

During wide-scale evacuations, there may not be enough transportation resources within a single jurisdiction to evacuate everyone who needs assistance. To build a transportation surge capacity, jurisdictions should, as part of their local evacuation planning process, establish transportation contracts with providers and vendors in surrounding jurisdictions.

Communities should establish contracts with transportation providers in surrounding jurisdictions **to ensure surge capacity is available** during wide-scale evacuations

To ensure continuity, planners should secure more than one vendor to provide transportation and evacuation services. This will help to leverage additional accessible transportation resources during large-scale evacuations.

Jurisdictional planning is critical for successful and inclusive evacuations. Personal preparedness is also important as taking necessary precautionary measures in advance of disasters helps individuals develop strategies and secure resources that maximize survival when government-based assistance is delayed or unavailable.

The following section presents recommendations for individuals with access and functional needs to further personal preparedness planning efforts.

## Section 2: Personal Planning for Individuals with Access and Functional Needs

A person's ability to successfully evacuate from an emergency tomorrow may depend on the planning and preparation a person does today. This section provides recommendations that individuals with access and functional needs can use to prepare for an emergency evacuation.

### Recognize the Types of Emergencies in Your Region/Area

It is important to know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from the authorities. Above all, stay calm, be patient, and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready to evacuate when there is an emergency or disaster.

### Get Emergency Alerts

In an emergency, you need as much information as possible to know what is coming, when to evacuate, and where to go. Use the following resources to access important alerts and safety information.

### Be Informed:

- ✓ Go to [CalAlerts.org](https://CalAlerts.org) and sign up for free emergency alerts
- ✓ Utilize 2-1-1 or a similar notification line for important emergency information
- ✓ Watch or listen to local news for reports on the emergency
- ✓ Find the name and frequency of your county's Emergency Radio System
- ✓ Follow local emergency management, fire, and law enforcement agencies online and via social media

### Online Resources:

- ✓ Sign up for earthquake alerts and information using the MyShake app
- ✓ [News.caloes.ca.gov](https://News.caloes.ca.gov) has the latest emergency information,
- ✓ [Response.ca.gov](https://Response.ca.gov) has information about active wildfires, power shutoffs, shelters, and road closures
- ✓ [Ready.gov](https://Ready.gov) has safety information for individuals and families

## Develop a Plan

Think of people who can assist you to safely evacuate during an emergency (e.g., family, neighbors, friends, or care providers).

### *Create a Contact List*

- Make a contact list of friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors, or other people who can help you evacuate
- Discuss your disaster plans with your support networks and, as appropriate, include them in your evacuation planning process
- Write down the phone numbers and website addresses of local accessible transportation providers
- Ask schools about plans to reunite parents and children
- Make sure your support network knows your evacuation destinations
- Plan for multiple evacuation locations as your meeting place may need to change depending on the disaster



### *Plan Beyond Your Immediate Personal Support Network*

- If you undergo routine treatments at a clinic or hospital, talk to your service providers about their emergency evacuation plans
- Identify back-up service providers in areas you might evacuate to following an emergency or disaster

### *How To Evacuate*

- Think now about potential challenges you may encounter evacuating during a disaster and plan accordingly
- Follow the guidance and instruction of local authorities
- Evacuate early if you need extra time or support to get out
- Learn different evacuation routes to leave your community
- Have a paper map in the event internet and cell services are down and secure a county Evacuation Planning Area Map if one is available
- Practice evacuating; use the transportation you would utilize in a disaster and involve the people in your support network
- If you do not have access to your own personal transportation, identify local transit agencies/providers
- Pack a Go Bag with any supplies you will need

### *Consider Your Service Animal and Pets*

- Make plans for your service animal and pets
- Keep in mind that what is best for you is typically also best for your animals
- Remember, service animals are allowed inside emergency shelters

### Additional Key Planning Measures:

- ✓ Responders will take all measures to ensure you and your support system remain together, such as family, a service animal, personal caregivers, or your assistive technology devices and supplies
- ✓ Work with local services, public transportation, or paratransit to identify all accessible transportation options
- ✓ Know the evacuation routes from your home, place of business, school, neighborhood, city, or area and travel them before a disaster so they become familiar
- ✓ Tell your support network where your emergency supplies are and consider giving someone you trust access to your residence
- ✓ If you use dialysis or other life-sustaining treatments, identify the location of more than one facility
- ✓ Make sure your emergency information states the best way to communicate with you

## Finding Shelter

In the event of an evacuation, use 2-1-1 (where available), [the American Red Cross shelter locator](#), and other local services to find emergency shelters. All government supported shelters in California are designed to be physically and programmatically accessible. If you have concerns about seeking shelter, please know:

- Emergency shelters are available to the whole community
- California law mandates all public shelters must be accessible
- Service animals are allowed inside public shelters

## Pack a Go Bag

### *Pack Ahead*

A Go Bag should include the critical items you will need if you are ordered to evacuate. By packing a Go Bag in advance of an emergency, you will have it ready at a moment's notice. Tips to consider include:

- Think about survival basics such as food, water, first aid, and tools
- Plan to make it on your own for at least three days
- Consider packing two kits: one to stay where you are and a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to leave your home (this kit should be sustainable for at least seven (7) days)
- Keep a kit in any place that is often frequented, including, but not limited to home, workplace, and/or an automobile

### *Include Important Documents in Your Go Bag*

- Include copies of important documents in your Go Bag, such as family records, medical records, wills, deeds, social security numbers, charge and bank account information, and tax records
- Include copies of medical prescriptions, medical orders, and the manufacturer/model and serial numbers of the assistive devices you use
- Pack copies of identification and insurance cards
- Bring a map and contact lists
- Include your list of important contacts so you can reach out to the people you care about, and who care about you.
  - It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container; if there is any information related to operating the equipment or life-saving devices you rely on, include those in your emergency kit as well
  - Include the names and numbers of everyone in your personal support network, as well as your medical and disability service providers

Additional items for your Go Bag might include:

- ✓ At least a week's supply of any medication or medical supplies you use regularly, or as much as you can keep on hand
- ✓ Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency
- ✓ Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, list of your allergies and health history
- ✓ Extra eyeglasses; backup supplies for any visual aids you use
- ✓ Extra batteries for hearing aids; extra hearing aids if you have them (or if you have insurance coverage for them)
- ✓ If you have a communication-related disability, make sure your emergency information includes instructions for the best way to communicate with you; even if you do not use a computer yourself, consider putting important information onto a portable thumb drive for easy transport in an evacuation
- ✓ Battery chargers for motorized wheelchairs, or other battery-operated medical/assistive technology devices
- ✓ Supplies for your service animal

*When Evacuating, Bring Some Cash (Small Denominations)*

- If the power is out, credit and debit card readers may not work, and you may be unable to get cash from an ATM

*Items/Tips for People Who are **Deaf or Hard of Hearing***

- Have a weather radio with text display and a flashing alert
- Keep extra batteries or chargers for hearing aids or cochlear implants
- Install smoke alarms with signals that can be seen and heard
- Consider carrying a pre-printed copy of key phrases, such as "I use American Sign Language (ASL) and need an ASL interpreter" or "If you make an announcement, please write it down for me."

### *Items/Tips for People Who are **Blind or Have Low Vision***

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print
- Keep a list of your emergency evacuation information on a portable flash drive or make an audio file and keep it in a safe place
- Keep communication devices in your emergency supply kit
- Keep extra eyeglasses or magnifying devices
- Consider your service animal or pets and plan for food, water, and supplies
- If you use a cane, keep extras at work, home, school, etc.

### *Items/Tips for People with a **Speech Disability***

- Carry an instruction card on how you want people to communicate with you if your equipment or assistive devices are not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or pictograms
- Keep model information of assistive equipment
- Keep a pen and paper or whiteboard and marker

### *Items/Tips for People with a **Mobility Disability***

- Pack your charging cords if you use a power wheelchair or prosthesis requiring periodic charging
- Keep a patch kit or sealant for flat tires and other necessary tools like a portable air pump
- Keep an extra mobility device, such as a cane or walker if needed

### *Items/Tips for Individuals with **Sensory Disabilities***

- Keep an electronic device with movies or games
- Pack headphones to decrease auditory distractions
- Keep a pair of dark glasses to assist with visual stimulation
- Include items to ease anxiety, such as fidget toys, chewable jewelry, stress balls, or bubbles, which can be helpful distractions

*Items/Tips for Individuals with **Developmental Disabilities***

- Keep handheld devices charged and loaded with videos and activities
- Consider a pair of noise-canceling headphones to decrease auditory stimuli
- Identify trusted allies to rely on in a disaster
- Practice your plan to build confidence and feel safe

*Items/Tips for Individuals Who **Require Medications***

- Try to maintain at least a week's supply of prescription medicines
- Keep a list of all medications, dosages, and allergies
- Keep a copy of your medical information including a list of your prescriptions and prescribers

## Conclusion

Successful evacuation does not happen on its own. Jurisdictions should work to promote inclusive evacuation plans and policies that support the needs of the whole community, build resilience, and enhance preparedness. The path to successful evacuation planning requires the engagement of stakeholders with access and functional needs throughout all stages of the development process.

Ensuring the whole community can receive and process evacuation-related information, secure accessible transportation services, and safely evacuate places of work, school, and living, requires jurisdictions to engage in thoughtful, coordinated, and inclusive planning.

Evacuation plans should account for the prompt and consistent delivery of effective evacuation-related information. Communication of an evacuation plan's essential elements should be done in an accessible manner using a broad variety of effective methods to reach the whole community. Jurisdictions should strive to ensure everyone can access emergency evacuation transportation resources.

Memorializing contracts with local and surrounding transportation providers is essential for securing emergency transportation resources and providing evacuation services in a timely manner during large-scale evacuations.

Individuals with access and functional needs should prioritize enhancing their personal preparedness to increase successful evacuation outcomes. Personal preparedness helps mitigate the impact of disasters on individuals, families, and communities and helps maximize control over the situation.

Successful evacuation planning is a whole community effort. Engaging partners brings to light lived experiences, and ultimately results in the creation of better, more culturally competent products.

Jurisdictions should continually refine their evacuation plans, engaging the community in its evolving needs, anticipating emerging threats, and learning from previous disasters. Doing so will have lifesaving and lifechanging impacts on all Californians.

## Appendix A – Transportation Agreement Checklist

When establishing contracts with internal and external county transportation service providers, jurisdictions should address the following:

Transportation Agreement Checklist		Check the box when the following applies
Agreements should be structured to ensure each box to the right of every section can be checked in the affirmative		
Objective	Do people with access or functional needs have equal access to programs and services as a result of this agreement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scope of Work	Does this agreement provide people with access and functional needs with accessible transportation to/from emergency shelters, cooling centers, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Term/Period of Performance	Does this agreement outline the circumstance(s) when services will be performed and when they will begin/end?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Representatives	Does the agreement detail who will serve as the 24/7 project representative(s) for the jurisdiction and vendor?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budgeted Amount	Does the agreement specify how much will be awarded under this agreement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service Tasks/ Procedures	Does the agreement indicate specific services, and the process for carrying out or requesting, these services?	<input type="checkbox"/>



Vendor Responsibilities	Does the agreement list what the vendor is responsible for before, during, and after evacuations (e.g., vehicle/ramp maintenance, licensing, service records)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share Contracts with Drivers	Are paratransit drivers aware of their responsibilities under this agreement before, during, and after evacuations?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jurisdiction Responsibilities	Does the agreement outline what the jurisdiction will be responsible for before, during, and after evacuations (e.g., providing information, communication services, equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Cost	Will services be free to evacuees?	<input type="checkbox"/>
24/7 Service	Are services available 24/7 without significant lead time from evacuees?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Phone Number	Is there a valid phone number available 24/7 for evacuees to secure on-demand transportation services?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach	Does the agreement outline who will be responsible for disseminating information about these services and how (e.g., an accessible, valid webpage that provides information and helps secure transportation services)?	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix B – Acronyms and Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADHC	Adult Day Health Care
AFN	Access and Functional Needs
ASL	American Sign Language
CALIF	Communities Actively Living Independent and Free
Cal OES	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CFILC	California Foundation for Independent Living Centers
DRC	Disability Rights California
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
IC	Incident Commander
OA	Operational Area
OAFN	Office of Access and Functional Needs
SCDD	State Council on Developmental Disabilities

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