

PrepTalks Discussion Guides provide a framework for community leaders to translate insights from the PrepTalk into community planning and outreach. Community leaders can use the PrepTalks materials at meetings, workshops, and conferences to address critical emergency management topics with whole community partners.

L. Vance Taylor – We Succeed or Fail Together

In his PrepTalk, Vance Taylor shares the personal story of a shelter that failed to take into account the needs of people with access and functional needs, and how emergency managers can achieve better integrated planning. Taylor is the Chief of the Office of Access and Functional Needs in the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. He explains the importance of understanding the communities we serve and the need to integrate people with access and functional needs within each phase of planning for communication, sheltering, evacuation, and medical needs. In his PrepTalk, Taylor calls for more fully applying technology, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, to emergency management to save the lives of people with access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters.

Partners for the Discussion

“Nothing About Us Without Us” is a motto used to emphasize the importance of including people with access and functional needs in policy decisions. We encourage you to also include emergency managers, nonprofit organizations, human service agencies, healthcare providers, hospitals, and schools to ensure your plans and protocols are effective.

I had to be the one to tell them that because we hadn't integrated or addressed their needs, they had no choice, but to sit in their filth and watch as their counterparts went in and out of showers to refresh themselves ... And that experience changed me.

— L. Vance Taylor

Discussion Topics

Topic 1: Understanding Your Community

Providing adequate services to all community members in an emergency starts with understanding the characteristics of the people who live and visit your community. The [U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey](#) provides population data on the following characteristics:

- Demographic Characteristics: Sex and Age, Access and Functional Needs, Housing Units...
- Social Characteristics: Education, Marital Status, Relationships, Grandparents...
- Economic Characteristics: Income, Employment, Occupation, Commuting to Work...
- Housing Characteristics: Occupancy and Structure, Housing Value and Costs, Utilities...



Questions for Discussion

- ❑ Get informed by the [California Access and Functional Needs Web Map](#). Effectively use data and mapping tools to help emergency managers integrate people with access and functional needs.
- ❑ Discuss ways to incorporate the census data into your emergency plans and practices:
 - Identify population segments that may need a tailored approach to preparedness education;
 - Provide information to design more realistic community exercises;
 - Provide insights to enhance alert and warning systems and make them more effective at any time of day;
 - Add people with access and functional needs to planning teams and give planners a clear understanding of the people in need of specialized assistance during an incident;
 - Strategize how to build social capital in the community (see [Dr. Daniel Aldrich's PrepTalk](#)); and
 - Watch the PrepTalk "[Who's at Risk? Rapid Mapping of Potential Hazard Exposure](#)" and use the discussion guide to quickly find data to share with community planners.
- ❑ Invite individuals with access and functional needs to share their experiences to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and perspectives. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has a list of state data sets to identify those with access and functional needs, including public health data sets, voluntary and confidential registries, and Smart911. Include representatives from organizations that provide services, including Independent Living Centers, department of healthcare services, department of social services, department of aging, and others. Ask individuals with different access and functional needs to tour shelter facilities and participate in exercises in order to ensure their needs are fully considered.
- ❑ Contact organizations that serve populations with access and functional needs to build a contact list and network of service providers. This should include:
 - Nursing home and assisted living facilities;
 - Schools or community programs that serve specific populations, i.e., the deaf, blind;
 - Hospitals, clinics, and dialysis centers; and
 - Durable medical goods providers.

People with Access and Functional Needs:

- May have physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities;
- May have limited mobility;
- May have communication barriers;
- May require additional medical assistance during an emergency event;
- May require transportation assistance; and
- May require personal care assistance.

Topic 2: Integrated Planning

Emergency managers have a responsibility to serve all. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides broad nondiscrimination protection for individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, and public accommodations and services operated by private entities.

Legal standards have been passed to help the emergency management community understand the needs of people with disabilities and access and functional needs. The U.S. Department of Justice issued [an ADA Guide for Local Governments, Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities](#). This guide provides an overview of accommodations on “the issues that have the greatest impact on people with disabilities:”

- Notification;
- Evacuation;
- Emergency transportation;
- Sheltering;
- Access to medications, refrigeration, and back-up power;
- Access to mobility devices or service animals while in transit or at shelters; and
- Access to information.

Notifications and Communications

ADA requires state and local governments, businesses, and non-profit organizations to communicate effectively with people who have access and functional needs. During a disaster, communication becomes especially critical. Resources to achieve integrated communications include:

- Sign language interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Closed-captioning;
- Translation services for persons with limited English;
- Alternative formats for individuals with blind/low vision; and
- Large print, plain text.

Questions for Discussion

- Does your community have the resources needed to meet the needs of all-abilities communications?
- Are interpreters and translators available on short notice and integrated with emergency response personnel?
- Are you prepared to issue alerts and warnings for the likely hazards in your community? [Ready.gov/alerts](#) provides resources to consider to ensure you have adequate methods and redundancies for issuing alerts and warnings.

- ❑ What are ways you can promote greater use of [NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards](#)? What facilities in your community would benefit from having a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards?

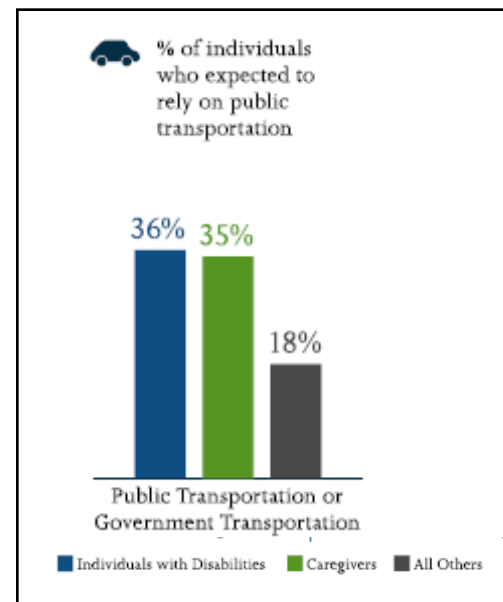
NOAA Weather Radios can be made accessible to people who are hearing impaired. In some situations, it can be connected to an existing alerting system in the home of someone who is deaf or hard of hearing. For example, if a person who is deaf has a flashing light alert system connected to a doorbell or other sensor, the radio may also have the capability to be connected to that system. The same may be true with pillows that vibrate or beds that shake. Some come with an LCD display, warning lights, or simple texts that make alerts visible to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Evacuation and Emergency Transportation

Emergency managers need to have resources available to evacuate people with access and functional needs, including accessible transportation options, medical equipment, and the ability to evacuate personal care givers, essential equipment and technologies, and service animals. Emergency managers with their local communities should regularly practice, review, revise, and update their plans to reflect changes in technology, personnel, and procedures.

Questions for Discussion

- ❑ Do plans identify how individuals with access and functional needs will be evacuated from their community? Is there a process to have enough lift-equipped vehicles?
- ❑ What plans currently exist? Are multiple entities dependent on the same provider(s)? Are protocols or memorandums of understanding/agreement (MOU/MOA) in place to avoid confusion when accessing and deploying assets?
- ❑ Do plans identify the transportation providers that will be responsible for and have the capacity to move individuals with access and functional needs from schools, neighborhoods, medical facilities, nursing facilities, etc.?
- ❑ Are disability and older adult transportation providers incorporated into evacuation plans (including the use of vehicles, drivers, and dispatch)?
- ❑ Do drills/exercises incorporate people with access and functional needs?



Source: [Preparedness in America, 2014](#)

- Do plans include a process to keep people with access and functional needs together with their family members, caregivers, durable medical equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, portable oxygen canisters), assistive technologies (e.g., Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), Text Telephones/ Teletypewriters (TTYs), hearing aids, Braille notetakers), and service animals whenever possible during an evacuation? And what are procedures that will assure reunification?

Shelters and Shelter Management

Shelters need to be physically accessible and equipped with resources for individuals with access and functional needs. In addition to ensuring that shelters are accessible and equipped with the proper assets and resources to meet the needs of all survivors; it is critically important to make sure survivors are not separated from their support systems (e.g., care provider, service animal, etc.). (Source: CalOES)

The U.S. Department of Justice published an [ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters](#). This includes guidance on accessibility to the building and within the building, parking, sleeping areas, restrooms and showers, drinking fountains, eating areas, availability of electrical power, and how to take accurate measurements of width, height, and slope. [FEMA Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters](#) also provides actionable recommendations to provide lawful and equitable delivery of functional needs support services for children and adults.

No two disasters are ever the same. They vary in a million different ways, but the one commonality they have is they – every time - disproportionately impact and affect people with access and functional needs.

— Vance Taylor

Questions for Discussion

- Who is responsible for ensuring designated shelters meet ADA accessibility requirements?
- Have you invited people with access and functional needs to visit your shelters and provide feedback?
- Do your shelter operations plan specify who is responsible for ensuring access is maintained (in Taylor's PrepTalk, he shares how the curb cuts to the shelter were blocked), and that resources are provided appropriately (e.g., space between cots is adequate)?
- Does your plan include a process to replace lost or broken functional needs support, including durable medical goods and medications?

Transition Back to the Community

When shelters close and individuals transition back to the community, it is important to ensure people with access and functional needs have their equipment and other support services restored as well. The disaster may have lost or damaged their critical equipment, services may not be re-instated or caregivers may not be able to resume their pre-disaster role. People who may have been self-sufficient before the disaster may now need increased services.

Questions for Discussion

- What is included in your plan to ensure people can live safely in their homes when the shelters close? What resources and procedures have you identified? Do you have a plan to provide accessible housing, if necessary?
- What steps will you take to ensure contracts for emergency services do not violate federal law on non-discrimination?
- How will the perspectives of people with access and functional needs be included in community decisions in recovery planning?

Topic 3: Include People with Access and Functional Needs

People with access and functional needs and their service providers contribute to strengthening your community's planning process. "Nothing About Us Without Us" means you should include representatives in your plan reviews, facility review, training, and exercises. Providing emergency managers, law enforcement, and fire safety officials with the opportunity to interact with constituents with access and functional needs before an event will give them greater understanding during an event.

Questions for Discussion

- How are you integrating people with access and functional needs in your emergency management planning, training, and exercises? Do you have a speaker's bureau to have presentations to provide the perspective of someone with access and functional needs?
- Do you have volunteer programs that support emergency management that include people with access and functional needs, such as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Volunteers in Police Service, or Medical Reserve Corps? CERT Basic Training materials includes an [Instructor Guide Annex for All Abilities](#).
- Where could you go in your community to find people with access and functional needs who would be interested in sharing their perspective? And help to prepare others with access and functional needs? [Ready.gov](#) provides specific considerations to help prepare. [The Red Cross produced a video](#) that covers considerations for people with access and functional needs.

Topic 4: Integrating Technology

Taylor discusses the value of using technology to improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. While technology is continuously changing and future developments are coming, there are many ways that existing technology can be applied today.

Questions for Discussion

- Discuss ways that you can better integrate technology to support forecasting, notifications, coordination, planning, and exercises.
- How are damage assessments conducted? Is using an unmanned aerial vehicle a viable option?
- How is information shared in disaster operations? How are situational awareness reports developed and disseminated? Are there ways to be more efficient and effective using technology?
- Discuss ways you can better use social media for preparedness, response, and recovery – for information sharing and for information collection. What topics would be appropriate for crowd sourcing?
- What are some local resources to stay aware of technology solutions? Are there colleges or universities with computer science or artificial intelligence departments in your area with which you can discuss emergency management challenges and brainstorm solutions?
- How can you increase your geographic information system (GIS) capabilities? In what way can GIS resources help you support people with access and functional needs?

I ask America's tech providers to work with us, join us to reframe and rethink and reform emergency warning and alerts. To develop new design, prediction, and planning tools so we can ease human suffering.

— Vance Taylor

For the companion Facilitator Slides and Resource List for this PrepTalk, visit:
<https://www.fema.gov/blog/preptalks-l-vance-taylor-we-succeed-or-fail-together>