

CAPITOL OFFICE
1021 O STREET
SUITE 7210
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4029

DISTRICT OFFICE
301 E. VANDERBILT WAY
SUITE 400
SAN BERNARDINO CA 92408
TEL (909) 888-5360

California State Senate

SENATOR
ELOISE GÓMEZ REYES
TWENTY-NINTH SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES:
EDUCATION
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SB 352 (Reyes): The Aging and Disability Emergency Preparedness Act

SUMMARY

SB 352 (Reyes) will require Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) programs to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergency events. The bill will also ensure that area agencies on aging and independent living centers are prioritized for state assistance when a state of emergency is proclaimed.

BACKGROUND

When a natural disaster occurs, individuals with "access and functional needs" may have needs that cannot be effectively addressed through traditional emergency response and recovery methods. "Access and functional needs" include: developmental or intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, chronic health conditions, injuries, limited or no English proficiency, age (including older adults and children), institutional living, low income, homelessness, transportation challenges (including reliance on public transportation), and pregnancy.

While all individuals are vulnerable during a natural disaster, those with access and functional needs face heightened vulnerabilities due to their unique circumstances.

In 2019, following the deadly fires that struck Sonoma and Butte counties in 2017, the Legislature directed the California State Auditor's Office to assess how well prepared the state is to protect vulnerable populations before, during, and after a natural disaster. The audit highlighted the critical gap in emergency management agencies' ability to support these vulnerable populations, revealing that people with access and functional needs are two to four times more likely to perish in a natural disaster compared to the general population.

Despite the critical importance of this issue, emergency agencies have often faced challenges in adequately supporting individuals with access and functional needs during natural disasters. Most recently exemplified by the recent fires in Los Angeles. The median age of those killed in the fire was 77 and at least one-third had mobility impairments. There is clearly a need to increase disaster and emergency training to support vulnerable communities.

THIS BILL

SB 352 (Reyes) requires that ADRC programs offer disaster and emergency preparedness training tailored to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies. The bill requires the training to incorporate tools developed by the Office of Emergency Services, the California

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Department of Aging, the Department of Rehabilitation, and other community partners, while raising awareness of available resources and guidance.

The bill also prioritizes funding for area agencies on aging and independent living centers that offer transportation and evacuation services during emergencies under the California Disaster Assistance Act.

SUPPORT

Disability Rights California (Support)

Center for Environmental Health (Support)

AARP (Support)

California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (Support)

CONTACT

Jhosseline Guardado, Policy Analyst

Jhosseline.Guardado@sen.ca.gov

(916) 651-4029