**DISASTER STRATEGIES COALTION**

**4/14/2022**

**10:30 AM**

>>: Hi, all. We will get started in just a moment. Are we good to go?

>>: I am.

>>: Good to go if you are.

>>: Okay. Welcome, everyone. We are recording this. Right?

>>: Yes, we are. Both on Zoom and it is live on YouTube.

>>: Great. Welcome, everyone. I am June. Disability policy consultant and contractor with CFILC's California disaster coalition. I am your host for these topic calls that occur on the second Tuesday on every month. I am sitting in my semi cleaned up office. Most of you know I never achieve.

No virtual background. Just me, brown and gray hair, blue shift. Purple pink jacket. Pronouns are she/her. She/her/hers. Can you talk about the accessibility briefing?

>>: I am one to have program coordinators with CFILC. I am an Asian American male. We have a captioner here today and a Google drive later to access in the chat. I pasted in the stream text look.

It is in the chat currently if you want to access that. To enable the transcript, the meeting has a CC icon. You can click. There is a drop down menu. You can enable the live transcript to see what the captioner is typing. I will pass it back over to you.

>>: Okay. Just to review for all of you up and coming calls, in May we have a conversation with the partnership for inclusive disaster strategies. With the co-executive directors. It is the only disability organization focused on equity for people with disabilities in an emergency and disaster.

It will be a conversation similar to today. In June we will talk to the world institute on disability in terms of their disaster and climate resilience. That'll be with Don Scaggs. In July, we have CFILC's logistics manager. Lisa Austin. She will talk about batteries. The power of life saving and supporting equipment and sustaining the devices.

Where are we? Where are we going with alternative power sources? In August, we have Andy. The director of disability rights. He will talk about the COVID‑19 task force he was a part of. They had a number of ongoing steps. We will hear how that is going. Are they monitored? What do we need to know?

In planning for September, we have a look at California's power safety. What do we need to advocate related to what has been done so far and what needs to be revised, changed, augmented? That should be interested.

On the fourth Thursday of this month, we usually have strategy calls. Russell, are you on?

>>: I am.

>>: Over to you.

>>: Thank you for setting me up. Hello, everyone. I am Russell. The statewide community organizer at CFILC. I just would like to share with you all that we are going to be making a bit of a pivot with the coalition for now.

This will be my last meeting with the disasters strategy coalition. We are making a pause on the networking and organizing meeting on the fourth Thursday. I have confidence the new statewide community organizer will help pick up that space again.

There won't be a very large gap. There are some applicants coming in. This month's networking and organizing meeting on the 28th won't be occurring. I hope it will be up and going again.

>>: You will be missing.

>>: I expect to follow all your progress. I am still here in California and invested. I am looking forward to hearing from L. Vance Taylor today.

>>: If you would like to introduce yourself in chat, please do so. Name, organization, and e‑mail. Let us know who you are before you speak. We will know in chat from your label you use. We will do a poll at the end of the call. We will provide in chat and on the list a survey link to give us some feedback. Thanks in advance for doing that. I sometimes think people think I am channeling L. Vance Taylor. I get asked, what does he think?

Questions like that. I don't know. Ask them. The California governor's office.

>>: Sorry, June. I muted you by accident. I was trying to let sol one in.

>>: How far did I get?

>>: You just introduced him.

>>: Repeat L. Vance Taylor is the Chief, Office of Access and Functional Needs, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. We asked him to talk about the history of his office, vision, staff, current projects, future goals, and community engagement. He will leave a good 70 minutes or more.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: I appreciate everyone being here. I know a lot of these people on the list. That is great. Good to be with friends. Some I haven't seen in far too long. COVID‑19 has taken us all online. Thanks for the introduction. I want it to be conversational.

I think the best learning occurs. I promise not to talk your ear off. I want to talk about myself and the office I am a native Californian. I spent a few years up in Humboldt and then moved back to Sonoma. I graduated high school at 17. I was diagnosed at age seven. I started using a power wheelchair by the time I was in 6th grade.

I was falling a lot. It became a safety issue. By the time I hit 8th grade is when I lost the ability to walk. The majority of my life I spent using a power wheelchair. The school district I was in made the assumption that because I had a physical disability, that I could not go to mainstream school.

My mom had to do the thing. She goes down to the office and threatens a lawsuit. The school did the right thing. She said, you better do well in class. Added pressure there. I did well academically. I went out of state for college it was a great opportunity.

I was doing things like managing care tenants for the first time. To be a 17‑year old manager, as well as first time college student, has complexities. As everyone here understands, that is the dynamic of our lives. We don't have the luxury of doing one thing.

You are always managing the complexities of life. That builds a level of resilience and innovation that a lot of people miss out on. I got my degree. I started an MBA program. I took three months off. I was going to do an internship in DC. I moved to DC.

That turned into a 13‑year stint. I worked for two members of congress. I became a partner at an emergency management consultant firm. I met my wife and got married. Had two kids.

I would go into a room. I was typically the only one there with a power wheelchair. I was usually the only one there with any disability. It was clear there were gaps in the way people looked at things like emergency management from a policy standpoint.

That notion that you can look at the same thing. To see it so differently based on your lived experience. I feel like although it wasn't officially in my role, that I was doing that any way. Based on my own experience.

We thought we were east coasters. They say if you want things to change, get comfortable. I had the chance to move back to California and serve as the chief. In that discussion about should we go back, it was a challenge. I loved my job. I loved our house. Kids loved their school.

We were really happy. While it is nice to with around family, it was different than what we had anticipated. I felt like there was a chance to move the needle in a meaningful way. It wasn't just we want someone in this role.

It was we want someone here that will make a difference and help change the culture of emergency management. We packed everything. We drove 3000 miles. I was here for almost three weeks. The third and fifth worst fires in state history. That is when you get into it. How are we communicating. How are we evacuating. What does recovery look like with a disability? The 12 years before I got here, we had three major Presidential declarations.

The seven years I have been here, we had 15. It goes to show you that that is not just an increase in the number of disasters but in the scope of those disasters. We would talk about preparedness. Make a plan. Be ready. People would say, I get that that is important. That stuff happens to other people.

I don't think there is a person on this Zoom that can't say they have not been impacted by fire, an earthquake, a flood, COVID‑19, poor air quality. We are impacted by these events. Public safety power shutoffs.

Now, when I talk about preparedness, it is personal for people. Now, we have lived experience. The reason why the office exists is because at a national level, we haven't done a great job of integrating access and functional needs into the system.

I always point to hurricane Katrina for that. They said, we will put the life-saving information out there during press conferences. They didn't think about the fact that some people were deaf. Without an interpreter, it falls on deaf ears. Some people are blind.

When you say go here for safety, that doesn't mean anything. For evacuation, we will send school busses. There was no accessible vehicles. It worked for most of the people in that area. What about when you rolled up in a wheelchair?

You have to decide, do I leave my chair behind? I am jeopardized my health and safety, my dignity. Do I stay here and hope it will be okay? That is a terrible choice. In sheltering, inaccessible shelters.

There were shelters on the second floor of buildings with elevators. Shelters with no wrap around services. Transferring. People couldn't be independent and safe and healthy. California said we have to get ahead of this.

It wasn't just during major catastrophes that we saw a disproportionate impact on the way people with needs were impacted. It was during every disaster. Regardless of scope or scale. Katrina alone, 70 percent of everyone who died had an access or functional need. They were lacking perspective they needed to integrate their programs.

The governor appointing a senior level executive as chief. It was a twofold mission. Identify the needs that all Californians have before, during, and after disaster. How do you integrate them through every facet of the process?

If your look up integrate, the actual definition is to make whole. It is to make what is presently an incomplete system whole. That is what we work to do. We work to do it in partnership with the whole community. It is this recognition that when it comes to emergency management, it is bigger than any one group or jurisdiction.

It is an acknowledgment that when it comes to this, we will fail or succeed. We work to have all the voices at the table. We want to make sure as we move through the process, we do so in a way that is equitable and fair and integrates people's needs. We are about to be a team of seven. We have a variety of duties. We were able to get 200,000 free at home COVID‑19 testing kits.

We will look to make that a monthly thing. We are working on a pilot with CFILC to help independent living centers secure sites for earthquakes. Phase two will be to provide LLCs with funding. Consumers can secure their homes and apartments. We develop training, curriculum, best practices, lessons learned, guidance for jurisdictions.

We are in the process of approving county emergency operation plans. A new role for us. We work with stakeholders to interact with the community. We do a lot of presentations. A lot of speaking gigs you have probably heard my stories at other venues. Work on PSPS to address (inaudible). To support the facilitation and development of things like the data R program. We have got in July, mark your calendars, July 19th and 20, from nine AM to noon Pacific, the nation's first ever national AFN symposium. We will look at inclusive practices from across the country.

The international association of emergency managers. Everything we do isn't just to increase resilience and safety. They are extremely important. It is to affect and impact the culture of emergency management. As disasters strike, access is on the forefront of people's minds. As opposed to something that gets tagged on at the end.

One brief example. Those first fires. We needed portable showers to help people. People couldn't shower. That is rough. We only had access to five in the entire state. They were all in LA at a concert. We had to commandeer them. Fast forward. Last fire season I get a phone call, you haven't said anything yet but we want you to know the team already has access to 70 portable showers. We can move them any place in the state within 12 hours.

If we need more, we have contracts across the country to bring them in nationwide. When we send sheltered to sites, they would send cots. Now 10 to 15 percent are accessible cots we have this. Our press team hired someone new. She was telling me about a press conference. You need a microphone and an ASL interpreter. She had no appreciation about the large effort to make that a reality. She was just taught this is how you do it. When she teaches someone else, she will teach them the same thing.

We are impacting the culture. We are integrating these systems. I will stop talking.

>>: If you have questions, I am happy to answer them. You can raise your hand. Under reaction, there is a way to raise your hand. You can put a question in chat. I am known as a person with a thousand questions. Here is one regarding the state emergency operation plan, and local emergency operation plans, where do we find the actionable disability content and details?

The statements are so vague. It is so frustrating.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Great question. Very timely as well. I will walk you back. A bill passed. It said you are legally required now to integrate three sections of your emergency operation plan. We saw that some emergency managers called in. They worked with the community. It was great. Others did it themselves. That next bill said, as part of your process to update your plan, you have do in partnership with stakeholders.

Then another bill got passed last year. AB580. You started to see some. We are stuck in this spot. Plans would say things like we will have an ASL interpreter. That was all. There is a disaster. It says, we will have an interpreter. No one knows how you do that. No contract in place. It is not enough to say, we will have accessible transportation. The plan said, and they named a vendor.

This vendor to provide accessible transportation. We will evacuate people. The plan was to call that group. There was never an MOU with that group. When the order went through, all the drivers evacuated. They left behind the vehicles with no one to operate them.

The way these bills are set up, those things can't happen. We are able to say, show us the contract. Show me how this contract will be executed 247 and at no cost to the community. I feel like it is a law of nature that disasters only happen after hours. That no cost thing is huge. We shouldn't have to pay money to leave our homes so we don't die during a disaster. Really excited about that change.

>>: Thanks. My takeaway is this legislation gives you permission to look behind the curtain and under the table and go for the real gritty details.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Any county requesting consultation is legally required to address our recommendations of that consultation.

>>: Great to hear about the new bills concerning services. The emergency bus. That was impressive. My concern is I have been in several of the emergency trainings. We did a power line down across the tracks. We are moving over to all electrical engines. The concern is to have evacuation processes in place.

It wasn't really real world. It was posted as an actual stop. I pointed it out. The likelihood of it happening at a stop is slim to none. How would you work in an area such as Martinez(?) What will you do about my chair? You get me off the train. How will you reconnect me?

Comment was we will give you a rain check and give it to you in the future. Power chairs are extremely expensive. Anything durable is expensive. When you rely on it for everyday use, it elevates to a higher degree. My question is what is being done to better ensure that it goes with the individual. Let us look at it from both directions.

>>: Great question.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: You cut out after the end.

>>: She wants to know what are the details when you as a chair user are rescued from any place. Near rail record tracks or auto accident. What is the plan to get your device to you ASAP versus some day?

>>: Great question. Sadly, I can't answer it. There is a lot of variability. I don't know. On the emergency management side, someone gets evacuated. If you were to call the assistant, that is why we pushed so hard I talked to people in shelters who evacuated their home so quickly that their neighbors came, put them in their pickup truck, drove away.

A lady told me what it was like to watch her home burn down with her wheelchair inside. There are things we can do to make sure vehicles are accessible and are some circumstances where you just have to go. We tried to address the issue of lost or damaged equipment.

We broaden it to statewide in California. It is national. It is an agreement between the American red cross and emotion. The largest provider of complex rehab technology in the country. If you are in a shelter a new chair or chair repair, that can all be facilitated.

It doesn't answer your original concern. If you end up at a shelter and it is damaged or you had to leave it behind, they could at least be replaced. It would be expeditious. Call me in six years doesn't do much for us.

>>: The contract with new motion involving the red cross is a great first step. In LA many years ago, there was a lawsuit about lack of detail regarding disability content and plans. One of the things they instituted was they had some trucks. That could be dispatched to pick up that mobility device and deliver it to where the user was taken. That is another good practice. We need to make sure it is embedded and sustained.

More questions?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: How are you.

>>: Good. Good to see you. I am working as a policy advisor who is aware these people they are putting together this plan. They don't even go to a meeting. What do you do when they don't take it seriously? (Inaudible).

L. VANCE TAYLOR: That is a concern.

>>: Can you repeat the questions? Some of us missed part of it.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: He is part of this group. They are providing advice on the integration of emergency operation plan. What if the advice is not being received or implemented? Great question. We know that if you put ten recommendations, it is not realistic to think all ten will go through.

If there is a key item not being addressed and it will make a gap in equities, what do you do? You document. Give me a call. I would like a heads up on that. We have a safety net starting to get built in. If the jurisdiction isn't taking feedback, we find out because on our questions is, does your jurisdiction had an advisory group? The second is, if so, who is on it? We ask for each section of the plan. Tell us how you incorporated your advisory group in the development of this session. If there is a jurisdiction not listening, there will be gaps. They will have a hard time answering the question about the interaction they had with their committee.

That is what it so great about AB580, we can now peel back layers. Before jurisdiction could say, yes. And move on. Now, it is like show me. We have been impressed with the vast majority of counties. You have good people trying to do great things.

We have heard, these bills let us tap into a source of knowledge that we didn't have. We can do something with it now. We are seeing jurisdictions move away from my plan. It becomes our plan. Communities have a community plan respond quicker. They recover quicker.

>>: Have you heard of a proposed policy called next gen 911? It will give funding to support and add text capabilities to 911 and GPS tracking?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: We can do text 911 now throughout the state. Next generation 911, I can give you a briefing on that. To learn more about, in terms of accessibility is happening. We have a team that does that through the piece applications. I am happy to arrange for that. If you want to have a meaningful dialogue on that, let me know.

>>: Maybe we could set up a briefing on that. We still have 30 minutes left. We are good.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: I thought it was 11:30.

>>: Question. Part of a safety plan, for school, it was clear accessibility was not part of the plan. What is being done to make sure school sites with accessibility by elevator and stairs to second floors have something in place to assist those with physical disabilities. Are public schools held at different standard?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: I think you are asking about things like evacuation chairs. There is no consistency on that front. There are ADA requirements and requirements associated with California state law. They don't mandate a certain number of resources. It becomes problematic when you look at a dorm setting.

You are in college. You live in dorms. How many chairs are there? One in every dorm? Every floor? That is a real challenge. Which of all the chairs should we get? Cost associated with that. There is no clear guidance on it or mandate that requires a certain number.

>>: Years ago, Dawn had a question about higher education level. I remember there being a directive that higher education worked on the emergency plan. It held levels of detail in them. It is up to us to ask, where are the devices? Who knows how to use them? With a very transient population, what is the responsibility for orientation during the class?

>>: Especially in dorms, they should have them. RAs should be trained how to use them. People need to know what they are, where they are. How they work. It does take us being our own best advocate. We want laws and regulations to be put in such a way that these things get addressed. It doesn't cover every circumstance.

>>: A question from Ron. Is enhance 911 the same as smart 911 system?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Smart 911, next generation 911, enhanced 911. I think I would feel more comfortable having a 911 expert talking you through not just the differences but what is California doing, where are we at in the adoption and roll out on each of those.

>>: I will take a crack at smart 911. It is a product. Jurisdictions can buy it. Anyone can register their household information. It is not disability oriented. Maybe they have someone with epilepsy in their home or people who are dependent on life supporting power. It is a product that has to be purchased by the jurisdiction. Don wants to know, does anyone know how to use the chairs?

Can their make dorms with floor level reserved for accessible rooms?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Each campus has their own way to address these issues. Can we make one chair that is comfortable? I felt like I was in a torture device. I almost wanted to try going down on my actual chair.

We have a long way to go.

>>: The devil is in the detail. It depends on the stairwell and who will be available. Some take people with considerable strength. Some have a turning radius that won't work. There is a lot of detail to be had when we talk about evacuation devices.

I think comfort is cool. It is your life or comfort. We learned greet stories after 911. The twin towers. Who survived by using these devices and who didn't? Great stories. Question from Brenna.

>>: I had a question about the emergency system. If there is a power outage, how do those work? I opted in for the copper line. I don't get ATT U verse. You can't call 911 out of your home unless you say I don't want this. I want ATT copper line. Do those specialty things work with it?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Good question. That way, if they get called to your house, it will be because you called them. Your address, they will have that information in your serious. It is not a matter of if you have power or not. Information will still be in their system. It is all through smart phone devices. If the cell tower is down, and you can't send a text. It is good you got the copper line.

>>: Can I add. Your copper line, if you have an RJ11 jack, they can be more resilient. Your point about the cell towers. The cruel truth is the battery power may not last too long. Am I right?

>>: Copper line is great for floods.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Can I make a shameless plug? I will put a link in the box here. We are looking to hire a new team member. They just announced the position. I put the link there. We have a position we are looking for. When the balloon goes up, they would deploy to the center and also into the field.

This is a great opportunity. If you click the link, it will give you all the details. What the job is. Who qualities. How to apply.

>>: This is David. Is there a way I can help, let me know. You know my background in this area.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Right now, I work for you.

>>: The local emergency operation plans. Will you use a checklist that the locals will get a head of time, so they know what you are looking for and be motivate today do the work before they submit?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: We have a crosswalk. It outlines what is supposed to be in your plan. You would say, yes. Here is how we address it. That is for each element.

>>: Is that available for us to look at?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: I am sure we can get you a copy. There is a California association of officers on campus. I worked with some of them on some campuses. Some are good. Some don't have a lot of knowledge in this area.

>>: Nice to see you. I am really concerned about what is going on with the targeted buy‑ons. Will there be an update? It is something we have to be concerned with. Homeland security has come up with the violence training. Will California be putting something else?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Thanks for helping us. He is talking about active shooter training. Before it was run, hide, fight. I would say, you lost me at run. We needed a guidance that was inclusive of everyone's needs. We now have the nation's first integrative active shooter awareness guidance.

We should talk about an update. I think it is probably appropriate. I am happy to have that conversation.

>>: I would love to work something out. How do we prepare? It is a fluid situation.

>>: June here. I want your opinion on after-action reports. Things that help to evaluate what worked and didn't work after an emergency. I wonder what your take was. It was more a look good document than a sincere attempt to evaluate what needs work.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: We always want to get better. We are dealing with so many disasters. We found ourselves dealing with multiple incidents at the same time. We will do a hot watch. Our coordination will improve. We need to do a better job at making sure the improvements get memorialized. We have to push that onto everyone else.

>>: Quicker guidance would be good. Sometimes these take for. By the time they reach the public, they are so whitewashed that they are not very informative about what needs work. I have heard people say stop in the top and wait. This is a scary proposal. It takes a short time to succumb to smoke from a fire. It feels horrible for people to be left behind while the rest of the panicking people are running out.

We call them crip ovens. Will first responders be called? May they be overwhelmed and not come? What is the plan?

L. VANCE TAYLOR: We will talk about individual companies. There is no standard practice to cover all the bases. I have been in that situation. I can see there is smoke. This doesn't feel good. I have been the guy in the evacuation chair too. (Inaudible) organizations, standards on pipes and hydrants and all this stuff. How about tackling this as a standard? How about if all five are trained? All first responders are trained? It is an area that I would say has to be addressed.

>>: Back to the university focus and honor advocacy, having an accessibility Working Group that can develop guidance and training and explain the need for could make it easier for people to work with individual campuses, plan examples from their safety peers and legal responsibilities.

I would add that it works on the individual campuses if this is the bandwidth to do that. What about this? The poll is up. You can do survey monkey if the poll is not accessible to you. We have five minutes left. I would say thank you for a diverse conversation in helping to people some of the onion we are always trying to peel of the complexities and nuances of these disability and disaster and inclusion issues.

I bet we could go on for hours if had the chance. A big thank you to you. With five minutes left, any more questions or comments? I see one hand.

>>: Thank you. For the college, it should be privy to include accessibility training. There were courses to help those. That falls in line with fire rescue and all that. It would be kind of like something to add into their training that they should be able to do. If anything happens at the school, they can participate in something that is actionable with what they have been trained to do.

L. VANCE TAYLOR: Thank you for sharing. I think there are certain things we can do better. There are things that are important to talk about and to push on. I think we are all in that same spot. We have to be active and try to affect the change we need within our own spheres of influence.

I tell this story about the bird on his back. Why are you laying on your back? Legs up in the air. The bird says, I heard the sky was going to fall. I am going to catch it. This bird with the little legs can't hold up the sky. The bird's response is I get it. My legs are small and weak. I couldn't possibly hold up the sky. We each do what we can.

That is June and me and everyone else. Not one of us can do it on our own. Collectively, we do what we can. We start to see more progress and improvement. We are not ready to hang up the mission accomplished banner. We still have a long way to go.

>>: Well said. It is better to do something than nothing. We do make the dents. It pays off. Even if it is grabbing for the small hanging fruit. Thanks again all of you for the privilege of your time. Look forward to your being with you being with us next month when we do the same thing with the partnership for inclusion disaster strategies. Stay safe. Take care.