

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 352 (Reyes) – As Amended March 26, 2025

Policy Committee:	Aging and Long Term Care	Vote:	7 - 0
	Emergency Management		7 - 0

Urgency: No                      State Mandated Local Program: No                      Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires state disaster assistance be prioritized for eligible area agencies on aging (AAAs) and independent living centers (ILCs) that provide transportation and evacuation services to individuals with access and functional needs.

This bill also requires an Aging and Disability Resource Connection program (ADRC) to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, during a state of emergency, AAAs and ILCs be prioritized for state disaster assistance for distribution of supplies and other disaster or emergency assistance activities, as specified, if both of the following apply:
  - a) The AAA or ILC provides transportation and evacuation services to individuals with access and functional needs during a state of emergency.
  - b) The entity is a private nonprofit organization eligible for disaster assistance pursuant to federal law.
- 2) Requires an ADRC program additionally provide disaster and emergency preparedness training specifically designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies and ensure their safety before, during, and after natural disasters and other emergency events, as specified. The training must do both of the following:
  - a) Utilize emergency preparedness and response tools developed by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), the California Department of Aging (CDA), the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), and relevant community partners.
  - b) Raise awareness of existing available emergency resources and guidance, as specified.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Cal OES, if requested to support implementation, estimates General Fund (GF) costs of up to \$400,000 annually for potential contract and personnel resource needs for the Office of Access and Functional Needs and the California Specialized Training Institute.

- 2) CDA anticipates minor and absorbable GF costs to provide information on existing emergency preparedness and response tools and resources, but notes the potential creation of new tools may impose GF cost pressures on the department.

CDA also indicates GF costs of an unknown amount for ADRC programs to provide the disaster and emergency preparedness training required by this bill. The state provides an annual \$10 million GF appropriation, administered by CDA, to the nearly two dozen designated ADRCs throughout the state. This bill adds additional training requirements on the ADRCs, but does not provide additional funding likely necessary to develop and provide the training.

- 3) DOR anticipates minor and absorbable costs to provide information on existing emergency preparedness and response tools and resources, but notes the potential creation of new tools may impose cost pressures on the department (GF and federal funds).

#### COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

The state has long been aware that individuals with disabilities and older adults face a disproportionate risk of death during natural disasters. A 2019 audit by the California State Auditor highlighted the critical gap in emergency management agencies' ability to support these vulnerable populations, revealing a lack of guidelines for assisting these individual in cases of emergency. Recently, wildfires in Southern California claimed the lives of several individuals with disabilities, many of whom were over the age of 70. Despite the longstanding dangers faced by this community, the state has repeatedly failed to take meaningful action.

- 2) **Background.** In recent years, California has experienced an increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters, particularly wildfires, and experts project these events will continue to occur more frequently. In December 2019, the California State Auditor released an audit highlighting deficiencies in state and local emergency preparations for addressing the needs of people with “access and functional needs.” This population includes those with developmental, intellectual, or physical disabilities, chronic conditions or injuries, limited English proficiency, older adults, those living in institutional settings, and those who are low income or homeless, among others.

***Emergency and Disaster Response.*** Cal OES is responsible for the state’s emergency and disaster response. Existing law, among many duties, requires Cal OES, in consultation with specified persons and entities, including the access and functional needs community, to develop guidelines for alerting and warning the public of an emergency, as specified, and to provide those guidelines to each city, county, and city and county.

Existing law authorizes Cal OES to administer a disaster assistance program that provides financial assistance from the state for costs incurred by local governments due to a disaster event. Existing law also provides, during a proclaimed state of emergency, an eligible private nonprofit organization, as specified, may receive state assistance for distribution of supplies and other disaster or emergency assistance activities resulting in extraordinary cost.

This bill requires otherwise eligible AAAs and ILCs that transport individuals with access and functional needs receive priority for state disaster assistance.

**AAAs, ILCs, and ADRCs.** CDA contracts with and provides leadership and direction to 33 (primarily nonprofit) AAAs that coordinate a wide array of services to seniors and adults with disabilities at the community level and serve as the focal point for local aging concerns. Overseen by DOR, ILCs are nonresidential nonprofit entities created and run by individuals with disabilities to help individuals with disabilities lead independent lives within a local community.

ADRCs act as a "No Wrong Door" system to provide a single coordinated system for people seeking reliable information and access to Long-Term Services and Supports. California's ADRCs are led by a core partnership between ILCs and AAAs, and include extended partner organizations. However, not all AAAs offer ADRC services.

Advocates assert that when a disaster occurs, traditional emergency response and recovery methods may not effectively meet the needs of individuals with access and functional needs. By ensuring that AAAs and ILCs receive priority for nonprofit state disaster assistance and by requiring ADRC programs to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training for older adults and individuals with disabilities, advocates contend this bill will help address the gap between local emergency management teams and organizations that work with and on behalf of community members.

**Master Plan for Aging (MPA).** California's senior population is growing faster than any other age group. By 2030, over 25% of the population in California will be 60 and older. In January of 2021, the Governor released his MPA, which prioritizes the health and well-being of older Californians and the need for policies that promote healthy aging. This bill advances the goals of the MPA regarding the needs and wellbeing of older Californians.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1068 (Bains), of this legislative session, requires the California Health and Human Services Agency to develop a working group to make recommendations, and submit a report, regarding the evacuation and sheltering needs of older adults and persons with disabilities living in long-term care facilities during emergencies. AB 1068 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 1069 (Bains), of this legislative session, requires a lead agency, as defined, to coordinate with an AAA or an ADRC program through a memorandum of understanding to ensure these organizations have access to emergency shelters during disasters. AB 1069 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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