INTRODUCTION

Ana Acton
FREED, Executive Director &
California Foundation for
Independent Living Centers, Chair

FREED is a Disability Resource
Center serving people of all ages
including youth and older adults and
with any type of disability living in
Nevada, Sierra, Yuba, Sutter, and
Colusa Counties.
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

A Frontline View of the Oroville Dam and California Wildfire Disasters
A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF DISABILITY

At least 200 million people – including 18 million people with disabilities – will be displaced by climatic events by 2050.
In 2016 there were 60,236 wildfires burning 5.3 million acres

In 2017 there were 56,186 wildfires burning 9.1 million acres
CALIFORNIA 2017

Number of Fires: 9,133
Number of Acres Burned: 1,248,606

Thomas Fire became the largest fire in California state history at 281,620 acres.

Number of homes at extreme or high risk from wildfires in California: 2,044,800

Percentage of home at extreme or high risk from wildfires in California: 28%
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES & OLDER ADULTS IMPACTED

NUMBER OF DEATHS: Estimated at 47 from the Tubbs Fire, Lobo and Thomas Fires.

The majority of deaths were older adults and people with disabilities.

"A majority were found inside their homes, unable to escape as the fire bore down. At least one was in a wheelchair. Another was lying next to a vehicle."

Mike Pence said it’s “heartbreaking to think that many of the fallen represent..., in some cases senior citizens who simply were not able to escape the flames that overcame their homes.”

– LA Times, October 12, 2017
In Santa Rosa, the average age of the 10 people who died was 75, highlighting the risk among older adults and people with disabilities who live in rural regions.
"28-Year-Old Woman in Wheelchair Dies in California Wildfires as Father Tries to Save Her," Says Aunt – People Magazine
THE YEAR OF DISASTERS

In 2017, two large scale disasters impacted the communities that FREED serves including the Oroville Dam Spillway Failure and the Wind Complex Fires.
Oroville Dam Spillway Failure

The Oroville Dam in northern California is the tallest dam in the United States, rising 770 feet high. It holds back a reservoir containing 1.1 trillion gallons of water, supplying farms and cities across the state. It’s a vital piece of infrastructure.
1-hour notification to evacuate Sunday evening due to the threat of uncontrolled flooding
188,000 people were evacuated
Evacuation was lifted 2 days later
OROVILLE DAM

- Called 571 individuals in low lying areas of Yuba and Sutter Counties.
- 60 – 70 refused to evacuate
- Maintained list of 57 individuals who refused to evacuate
- Specific information to 7 individuals to evacuate safely
- Provided 11 assistive devices/DME
- 2 days in Yuba & Nevada County EOC
- Visited 2 emergency shelters
- Deployed accessible van into evacuation zone - Provided wheelchair transport to 2 individuals
- Provided gas to one consumer
FREED STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE
"Sandra Rix never left town, mainly because of health issues that would have complicated an evacuation, she said.

The sheriff said ‘...residents – including those who are disabled or don’t have vehicles – should remain in shelters out of the county in case another mandatory evacuation order is issued.’ – Sacramento Bee

"People spoke of chaos during the emergency, with jammed phone lines, evacuation routes leading through flood zones and the elderly and disabled left behind.

'I was signed up for every notification service there was,' said Alley. 'I got nothing. No reverse 911. No text notifications. Not even my neighbors let me know.' – Capitol Radio
WIND COMPLEX FIRES

Cascade, Lobo & McCourtney Fires – Yuba & Nevada Counties:

• Called 139 individuals in evacuation areas
• Provided specific information to 7 individuals to evacuate safely
• Provided 10 assistive equipment/DME to individuals and shelters
• Provided wheelchair transport to 3 individuals to appropriate shelters or returning home
• Visited 2 emergency shelters to identify the needs of people with disabilities
• Visited EOC and multiple referrals
• Provided personal assistance support to one individual
FREED STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE
BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Established relationship with local OES
- Participate in local emergency plans and trainings
- Staff emergency contacts
- Office relocation
- Plan for staff evacuated during disaster
- Online consumer database
- Community education on personal preparedness
- Funding
LEARNING: EVACUATION NOTIFICATION

- Lack of effective notification, confusion over mandatory vs advisory evacuation areas
- People stuck on highways trying to evacuate
- **TUBBS FIRE - SONOMA COUNTY**
  - 500 deaf community members
    - Alert systems not activated
- Lack of interpreters, captioning
- Coordinate messaging across jurisdictions
- Have a way for people to get reliable and updated info: 211 Nevada County
- Send out emergency notifications even if it goes out wider than the impacted area
- All communication must go out in multiple ways and in accessible formats
LEARNING: TRANSPORTATION & EVACUATION

- People with disabilities and older adults were left behind
- Paratransit and ambulance
- Reports for medical transport trying to charge individuals to evacuate
- People transported long distance – difficulty getting back home
- Oroville - FREED deployed van
- Wildfires – FREED too much risk to send staff

- Transportation for evacuation must include FREE accessible resources
- Need number to call to get assistance with accessible transportation
- MOUs with transit services are needed
- Repopulation – must provide assistance
LEARNING: SHELTERING

- Needed Real Time updated list of shelters available
- Shelter was not prepared to provide personal assistance care, specialized equipment, etc.
- Consumer was not able to get personal assistance services in the shelter and returned home to evacuation zone
- All shelters should be fully integrated and accommodate people with AFN
- Shelters should not segregate individuals with AFN into medical specific shelters
- A shelter provided PA services for the first time
- County had relationship with Sacramento State nursing interns
- FREED filled gaps in PA services
- Balance: personal preparedness and shelter preparedness
- County invited FREED to visit shelters
- No local FAST Teams – State FAST Team visits
- Need for local coordinated teams to address AFN in shelters and beyond
LEARNING: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

- Invite AFN partners to the table and EOC
- Prioritize AFN and you take care of whole community
- Exchange personal contacts
- Co-location of EOC
LEARNING: RECOVERY

- Area that needs improvement
- Disconnect or confusion about State, FEMA and local coordination
- Individual recovery services
- Tracking mitigation funding & compliance with Rehab Act
- Very difficult to navigate FEMA, Cal OES for individuals and organizations
LEARNING: PLANNING

• Develop relationship with local Offices of Emergency Services
• Participate in local disaster plans & trainings
• Emergency management & AFN Meetings
CALIFORNIA FOUNDATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

- Disability Organizing Network – what parts of the systems need to be improved
- Tech Act Grantee, Ability Tools, networked with ILCs to meet unmet AT needs
- Richard Devylder Disaster Relief Fund
- CA Disaster Strategies Coalition
- Need for coordination during and after disaster
LEARNING: PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS

- Wildfire Defensible space
- Evacuation Routes
- Transportation
- Medications
- Assistive Devices/DME
- Important paperwork
- Personal Assistance
- Network of 4/5 family members/neighbors
QUESTIONS

Ana Acton
Executive Director
FREED
2059 Nevada City Highway, Suite 102
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(530) 477-3333 voice
(530) 477-8194 TTY
(530) 477-8184 fax
www.FREED.org