



Blackhawk Firefighters Association Fire & EMS Conference



March 20, 2026, 6:00pm-9:00pm

Emergency Services Outlook for 2026 and Beyond

- Chief Rick Lasky - Retired Fire Chief
- Chief Haigh - Retired Fire Chief & Principal of Haigh Solutions LLC
- Chief Emily Rauscher - Skagway Fire Department
- Chief Jeff Bryant - Retired Fire Chief

\$100 Fee to Attend. Meal Provided. For Questions or Registration, please email student name, department, and class to info@dingesfire.com.

Location: 123 North Franklin Street, Byron IL 61010

BLACKHAWK FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION FIRE/EMS CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 21, 2026 - 8:00-5:00pm

8 Class Offerings - Byron, IL

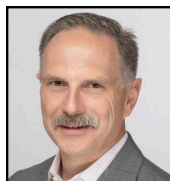
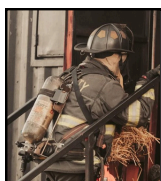
- *1st Rung - HOT - AC Wittenauer, Lt. Kucaba - [789 North Colfax]
- *Firefighter Down and Dirty - HOT - Lt Jeremy Schwab - [123 North Franklin]
- *Electric Vehicle Fires - HOT - (includes extrication) - Chris Soda - Junkyard Dog - [789 North Colfax]
- *Understanding Fire Behavior - HOT - Flashover Simulator-Shane Boehmke, President Northern IL Fools - [789 North Colfax]
- EMS Track - Critical EMS Skills - Chief Haigh/ Haigh Solutions - [123 North Franklin]
- 5 Alarm Leadership - Leadership Skills for Company Officers - Chief Rick Lasky - [123 North Franklin]
- Women in the Fire Service - Emily Rauscher, Fire Chief - [123 North Franklin]
- Marketing the Fire/EMS Service and PIO Readiness - Ashley Losch retired Division Chief of Communications for Arizona Fire & Medical Authority - [789 North Colfax]



<https://shorturl.at/q2oMG>

Cost - \$50 per BFFA member or \$100 per non-BFFA member. *= Hot classes - Full PPE and SCBA needed.

Lunch hour food will not be provided. All classes will have a break to allow students to go to local eateries and return to class. For Questions or Registration, please email student name, department, and class to info@dingesfire.com.



Sponsors:



BLACKHAWK FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION FIRE/EMS CONFERENCE



Saturday, March 21st, 2026 - 8:00-5:00pm

1st Rung Recruit & Rookie Fire and Extrication Training - Hands-On - with AC Wittenauer & Lt. Kucabaw

This class will be geared towards perfecting basic fire ground operations with hands-on live fire training in several different scenarios with hose handling and advancement. Additional rotations will include an SCBA confidence-building course, forcible entry, and vertical ventilation practical. Instructors from several departments will bring over 150 years of fire ground experience. Expect an intense class packed with information, geared towards a new or experienced firefighter just wanting to get it right.

Firefighter Down and Dirty - HOT - with Lt. Jeremy Schwab (NO IL F.O.O.L.S VP)

This course will work on skills in the first part of the class, such as: Ladders – VEIS, Searching – Victim Drags, & Hose work. You, the student, will rotate from skill station to skill station, getting sets & reps in all while the instructors & fellow students help drive home the importance of never giving up & pushing on. That brings you to the afternoon session when the instructors put you into companies. (Examples: Engine 1 gives a size up & stretches into find the fire, Truck 2 – ordered to throw ladders & go in for search on 2nd floor, Engine 2 – assist Eng 1 with hose & search 1st floor.) What's next you ask? Rotate crews & do it again – more sets & reps. Main topics on Ladders, VEIS, Search, drags, & hose work, but the Instructors may pass on a few other "Nuggets" throughout the day that one day might make a difference. **Full PPE & SCBA required.**

Electric Vehicle Files - HOT - with Chris Soda (Junkyard Dog)

This comprehensive Vehicle Extrication class is designed to equip firefighters with the knowledge and hands-on skills needed to safely and effectively extricate victims from vehicles involved in accidents. Participants will gain a deep understanding of vehicle construction, safety systems, and the latest techniques used to manage complex extrication scenarios. By the end of this course, participants will have a solid foundation in extrication tactics and be prepared to handle even the most challenging rescue situations, ensuring they can perform with confidence under pressure. Modern Techniques for Modern Vehicles.

Understanding Fire Behavior - HOT - with Shane Boehmke (President & Founder of NO IL F.O.O.L.S)

This class will discuss & show the Stages of Fire: Discuss Smoke reading, from interior & exterior; Show Signs & Symptoms of Flashover; Show Flow Path & the importance of understanding it. When you get your turn in the Simulator, you will see & feel the stages of fire, from Ignition to Growth to Flashover. Durning the Flashover you will not only see it but Feel the Heat with temps reaching 1,100 degrees F, at the ceiling, then as it lingers over your head, all while you're wanting to touch it as if it was a 3D movie, but then you are reminded of how HOT it is & the Dangers of a Flashover as your Instructors send it into the Decay stage only to do it again, another Flashover for you to SEE & FEEL it again. Along with fire behavior we might have a few other things for you to round out a fun-filled day of adding another nugget or two to the toolbox. **FULL PPE & SCBA required.**

EMS Track - Critical EMS Skills - with Chief Haigh/ Haigh Solutions

This EMT-focused course reinforces core airway management and patient care skills through hands-on, skills-based learning. Participants will review basic airway anatomy and physiology as it applies to effective airway positioning, ventilation, oxygen delivery, and patient assessment. Emphasis is placed on practical application and decision-making commonly encountered in the prehospital setting. The course will include interactive skills labs focused on airway management, IO placement and insertion, followed by an afternoon session dedicated to trauma assessment, splinting, and patient packaging. The day concludes with a quick medication refresher/overview and a guided discussion on EMT well-being, stress management, and resilience, highlighting the importance of provider health and longevity in emergency medical services. The class is designed for EMRs, EMTs, and ALS providers. The training will place special emphasis on how EMRs and EMTs can provide assistance to their ALS partners.

5-Alarm Leadership: Leadership Skills for Company Officers - with Chief Rick Lasky

This particular program from the Five Alarm Leadership series is all about the issues and responsibilities that company officers handle every day. We all spend much more time managing firehouse issues and dealing with our firefighters than we do fighting fires. Shouldn't we spend some time preparing for these tasks so our fire station environment is as successful as our fireground operations? Join Chief Rick Lasky as he discusses issues such as:

Leadership and the Leader, Manager, and Supervisor "traits" of the company officer; What It Takes to be That Great Company Officer; Roll Call: Setting Up and Planning Your Day; Riding / Tool Assignments; Company Training and "Quick Drills"; Communications: Shift to Shift – "Pass It On" – Up & Down the Ladder; Your Firefighter's First Day: The Company Officer's Role; Your Company Officer's First Day: The Chief's Role. Chief Lasky has handled many of the difficult and challenging situations that you are likely to face sometime in your fire service future. He will talk about what causes problems in the firehouse, how to work through them and how to get a handle on your daily firehouse routine.

Women in Fire Service - with Emily Rauscher, Fire Chief

Women are helping shape the future of the fire service. We are breaking barriers, leading teams, and strengthening the connection between emergency services and the communities we serve. While representation remains low, momentum is growing, driven by courage, resilience, and commitment to change. This session celebrates the contributions that women contribute to the fire service while openly exploring the challenges that still exist. Through stories, insight, and shared experience, the discussion will examine leadership pathways, the importance of diversity in the workplace, and the systems that support recruitment, retention, and advancement. By embracing diversity and broadening perspectives, the fire service becomes stronger, more adaptable, and better prepared for the challenges ahead. This conversation invites participants to reflect, learn, and take practical steps toward building a service where everyone has the opportunity to serve, lead, and thrive.

Marketing the Fire/EMS Service and PIO Readiness - with Ashley Losch retired Division Chief of Communications for Arizona Fire & Medical Authority

Every fire department communicates—whether it plans to or not. The only real question is this: do you control the message... or do the trolls? Whether you love it or hate it, the media and social media aren't going anywhere—and neither are public expectations for transparency, real-time updates, and accountability. Today, every firefighter is part of the department's brand, story, and reputation... even if they never wanted to be. From viral incidents and body-cam clips to instant public judgment, firefighters now operate in a world where public perception and trust are as critical as turnout times and tactics. This session breaks down why communication is no longer "extra," "nice to have," or "the PIO's problem." It's an operational function that directly impacts recruitment, retention, funding, morale, incident outcomes—and most importantly, public safety. Designed for firefighters, officers, and leaders. No fluff. No marketing jargon. Just real examples, practical takeaways, and a fresh look at how communication impacts the fireground, the station, and the future of the fire service. If you've ever thought, "We don't need a PIO" or "Social media isn't our job," this is not to be missed.

