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Welcome to the
61st
Illinois Emergency Services
Management Association
Summit



April 14 – 17, 2026

Northfield Inn, Suites & Conference
Center
Springfield, Illinois

Current as of February 28, 2026

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Tuesday	April 14, 2026
0700 – 1000	Pre-Summit Registration – Northfield 1 Lobby
0800 – 1500	AWR-330 – Whole Community Emergency Management Planning – Opal Nici English & Roni Fraser Building resilient communities requires more than government planning: it requires meaningful integration of the whole community. This interactive session, based on the nationally recognized AWR-330 Whole Community Emergency Management Planning course, gives participants practical tools to identify, engage, and sustain partnerships with the people and organizations that are often left out of traditional planning processes. Through guided discussions and hands-on activities, attendees will map community stakeholders, analyze functional needs populations, and explore strategies for incorporating nonprofits, private sector partners, and community groups into emergency planning. Real-world examples and facilitated exercises will help participants move beyond theory and into actionable planning approaches that strengthen preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Participants will leave better equipped to turn “whole community” from a concept into a working part of their local emergency management program.
0800 – 1500	Protecting Houses of Worship – Northfield 1 Ballroom John Dwyer, Steve Lyddon, Anthony Schuble, Katelyn Trunnel, Mia Ray Houses of worship are vital community anchors, often serving as gathering places, support networks, and disaster assistance partners. Protecting these spaces requires thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and practical preparedness strategies tailored to faith-based organizations. Provide emergency managers and community leaders with tools to help houses of worship strengthen their safety and resilience. Explore prevention and preparedness concepts, facility emergency planning, and risk assessment approaches designed specifically for faith-based settings. Highlights how emergency management agencies can support worship communities through outreach, planning guidance, and available preparedness resources. Through discussion and real-world examples, attendees will learn how collaborative planning between emergency management, public safety agencies, and faith-based organizations can reduce risk, improve response coordination, and strengthen whole-community resilience.
0900 – 1500	Build an EOC Escape Room Workshop – Ruby Victoria Kluge This interactive workshop walks through the process of designing and building an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) escape room as a hands-on training tool. Begins with a live demonstration of an EOC escape room, allowing attendees to experience firsthand how puzzles, time pressure, and information flow replicate real EOC dynamics. Participants will then break down the design components learning how to translate plans, ICS roles, and operational objectives into clues, injects, and success criteria aligned with HSEEP and EMAP standards. By the end of the workshop, attendees will leave with a repeatable blueprint for creating their own EOC escape room that strengthens coordination, situational awareness, and decision-making in any emergency management environment.
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1000 – 1500	<p>Transportation Incident Management – Topaz Joseph Gasparich & Gino Koehler</p> <p>Roadway incidents are among the most frequent, dangerous, and multi-agency responses communities face. Effective Traffic Incident Management (TIM) is not just about clearing scenes quickly; it's about coordinated decision-making that protects responders, supports victims, and restores critical transportation lifelines that communities depend on. This session introduces the principles of Traffic Incident Management as a whole-community safety and resilience strategy. Participants will explore how law enforcement, fire, EMS, transportation, towing and recovery, and emergency management work together using shared terminology, unified objectives, and proven scene management practices. Through scenario discussion and applied best practices, attendees will examine responder safety, quick clearance principles, traffic control, and interagency coordination that reduce secondary crashes and improve operational effectiveness. The session emphasizes how strong TIM practices strengthen community resilience by protecting responders, reducing system disruption, and improving coordinated response across disciplines.</p>
1130 – 1230	<p>Lunch – Northfield 1 Ballroom <i>Sponsored by ???</i></p>
1500 – 1800	<p>Exhibitor Set Up – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2 Dan de Grazia</p>
1800 – 2100	<p>Game Night Hospitality Room – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2 Bring your own Emergency Management game – or – play someone else's. <i>Sponsored by Juvare</i></p>



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Wednesday	April 15, 2026
0700 – 0800	Registration – Northfield 1 Lobby
0800 – 0830	Opening Ceremony – Northfield 1 Ballroom John Dwyer, President Michael Graves, Executive Director Presentation of Colors; Pledge of Allegiance; Dignitary Comments
0830 – 0930	IEMA-OHS Update – Northfield 1 Ballroom Ted Berger, Beth Windisch, Calyton Kuetemeyer, Adnan Khayyat Illinois communities rely on strong state and local coordination to stay resilient before, during, and after disasters. This executive-level session brings together leadership from all three IEMA-OHS operational offices to translate current statewide priorities into local action. Rather than a general update, this session will focus on what emergency managers and partners need to know now: including policy shifts, capability investments, evolving threat considerations, and upcoming program changes that directly affect planning, training, funding, and operations at the local level. Each Deputy Director will highlight practical implications for local jurisdictions, followed by facilitated Q&A to connect statewide strategy with on-the-ground realities. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of where Illinois emergency management is heading and how to align their local efforts to strengthen whole-community resilience.
0930 – 1000	Break with Exhibitors – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2
1000 – 1100	Using Public-Private Partnerships to Build Resilience – Northfield Ballroom 1 Dr. Brian Gerber Consider the opportunities and challenges of local emergency management offices working with nonprofit and private sector organizations to improve emergency and disaster preparedness and to build and improve community disaster resilience. How these efforts can sometimes be made through formal public-private partnership (P3) arrangements, or more often, through informal P3-like arrangements. It will present core management and operational issues in these partnerships, as well as providing case studies from across the United States for insights on how community resilience can be pursued - through partnerships - in communities of different sizes and geographic settings.
1100 – 1200	Rolling for Resilience: Gamifying Emergency Management – Northfield 1 Ballroom – Victoria Kluge Explore how gamification can transform emergency management training and exercises by increasing engagement, realism, and decision-making under pressure. Using Dungeons & Dragons inspired role-playing games and EOC escape rooms as case studies, to demonstrate how game mechanics can be intentionally mapped to ICS roles, resource management, situational awareness, and coordination objectives. Attendees will learn how these immersive formats can be designed to meet HSEEP and EMAP requirements while producing measurable performance data beyond traditional tabletop exercises. The presentation concludes with practical considerations for adapting gamified training to complex, multi-stakeholder environments such as major airports.

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Wednesday	April 15, 2026
1200 – 1300	Lunch – Northfield 1 Ballroom <i>Sponsored by Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions</i>
1300 – 1400	Homeland Security and Resilient Communities – Northfield 1 Ballroom Beth Windisch Resilience is a cornerstone of homeland security, ensuring that communities can withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions. Learn the unique challenges Illinois faces today, from cybersecurity vulnerabilities to critical infrastructure preparedness to climate change related disasters and other emerging threats. Spotlight promising solutions being implemented across the state, including technology-driven approaches, research, and public-private partnerships that enhance resilience. Attendees will have a clearer understanding of how resilience is operationalized within homeland security, and why it matters for Illinois' future.
1400 – 1500	Multi-Jurisdictional Emergency Management - Two Approaches – Crystal Mat Schneppe & Mick Fleming Share our experiences on shared service arrangements in emergency management. These approaches are a strategy to enhance capabilities, improve resource utilization, and strengthen regional resilience especially in jurisdictions with limited staffing or fiscal constraints. This session offers a comparative analysis of two distinct approaches to inter-governmental emergency management: the Joint Emergency Management System (JEMS) serving a network of municipalities in northern Illinois, and a three-county shared emergency management function recently implemented in northwestern Illinois. Drawing on real-world governance structures, operational frameworks, staffing models, and stakeholder engagement practices, presenters will explore how each model was conceived, the key legal and policy drivers behind adoption, and how collaborative decision-making occurs across multiple jurisdictions. Session attendees will gain insights into practical considerations such as funding mechanisms, common challenges (e.g., aligning priorities across diverse communities), and strategies for maintaining consistent planning, exercises, and response coordination.
1400 – 1500	Integrity, Trust, and Partnerships: Shared Purpose – Diamond Tammy Schneider Focus on real-world partnerships that make preparedness, response, and recovery work, even when personalities, priorities, and agendas don't always align. Practical examples from recent disaster response, this session highlights the value of building trust before disaster strikes, recognizing partner strengths, engaging non-traditional partners, and remembering that our role isn't to take over, it's to support. At the end of the day, effective emergency management isn't about being in charge; it's about making sure the people doing the work have what they need to get it done.

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Wednesday	April 15, 2026
1400 – 1430	WIU's EM Program: Preparing the Future Emergency Managers – Emerald Franco Perez Discussion about what WIU's EM program entails in course curriculum, what the students learn, how we get hands-on with tabletop exercises and different activities (such as our on-campus EOC). Discuss the EM Apprenticeship program and what happens there, along with the internship requirement for students to graduate.
1430 – 1500	WIU IESMA's Club Chapter - Who We Are – Emerald Rori Bowne, Aylah Hopson, and Jalen Fenner The WIU IESMA E-Board will introduce themselves and speak on the reinvention of the IESMA club on campus, what has been done in one year, and what they strive to accomplish in their current roles for their student peers, along with their experience with the club and what they have learned as regular members of the IESMA club or currently in their new E-Board Positions.
1400 – 1500	From Static Plans to Living Tools: Modernizing Incident Action Planning for Schools and Communities – Jade Joseph Gasparich Traditional emergency planning documents such as Incident Action Plans remain essential to preparedness and response, but they are often static, difficult to update, and disconnected from real-time decision-making. This session examines how artificial intelligence, digital planning platforms, and data-informed tools can be applied to modernize emergency planning processes, with a primary focus on school emergency planning and preparedness. Participants will explore how these technologies can support faster plan development, improve consistency, integrate current data, and enhance coordination among emergency management, public safety, and school stakeholders. Using school environments as a practical case study, the session will demonstrate how emergency management professionals can responsibly incorporate AI-assisted planning tools, digital document management, and data-driven inputs while remaining aligned with NIMS and Incident Action Planning principles. Examples and lessons learned will be applicable across a range of community preparedness and response planning efforts.
1500 – 1530	Break with Exhibitors – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2
1530 – 1630	IESMA Annual Membership Meeting – Northfield 1 Ballroom
1630 – 1730	President's Reception – <i>Your Favorite College</i> – Northfield 1 Ballroom
1730 – 2000	Awards and Supper <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Sponsored by IEM</i></p>

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Thursday	April 16, 2026
0730 – 0745	President’s Address – Northfield 1 Ballroom Daniel Eder
0745 – 0800	Executive Director’s Update – Northfield 1 Ballroom Michael Graves
0800 – 0815	EMCOM Update – Northfield 1 Ballroom Vic Martinek
0815 – 0830	IAEM Update – Northfield 1 Ballroom Mick Fleming
0830 – 0900	From Policy to Practice: Implementing State and Local Qualification & Credentialing in Illinois – Northfield 1 Ballroom Bob Flemming & Michael Graves Illinois is conducting a deliberate shift toward standardized qualification and credentialing for emergency management and EOC personnel. While the policies, task books, and credentialing plans are well defined, many jurisdictions are now facing the harder question: how do we implement this at the local and regional level? Provide a practical implementation roadmap for state and local agencies responsible for rolling out qualification and credentialing programs. Led by the Co-Chairs of the State Credentialing Committee, we will walk through how Illinois is operationalizing credentialing requirements, aligning local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) responsibilities with state guidance, and building sustainable partnerships across jurisdictions.
0900 – 1000	Getting Left of Bang & Preparing an Uncertain Future – Northfield 1 Ballroom Patrick van Horne Emergency managers are expected to anticipate crises, not just react to them. Yet many organizations still measure readiness by plans written and resources on paper, only discovering gaps when the incident is already underway. This session reframes the concept of getting “left of bang” for emergency management leadership, shifting it from individual anticipation to organizational capability building. Drawing on real-world disaster planning and response experience, it explores how emergency management leaders can deliberately develop the skills, processes, and decision-making capacity their teams will need before the next incident occurs. Designed for emergency managers, planners, coordinators, and senior leaders, this session introduces a practical framework for identifying readiness gaps, prioritizing capability development, and aligning planning, training, and exercises to real operational demands.
1000 – 1030	Break with Exhibitors – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2
1000 – 1030	Food Drive Pick-Up - Central IL Food Bank – Drive up Canopy Karleen Wagoner

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Thursday	April 16, 2026
1030 – 1100	What to do at Legislative Day – Northfield 1 Ballroom David Christensen, Allison Anderson, Mick Fleming, & Michael Graves Last-minute instructions before heading to the Capitol and Stratton Building.
1100 – 1200	Debris Planning and Interagency Coordination – Crystal Nicole Sprague & Mark Doerfler Will highlight how the Kane County Office of Emergency Management used a Debris Management Plan update as a vehicle to strengthen interagency coordination and deepen operational understanding across emergency management, county public works, IPWMAN, and township partners. Through sustained engagement with ten stakeholders across three agencies, the planning team gained critical insight into operations at the township, county, and mutual aid levels, including debris management priorities, situational awareness, roles and responsibilities, and decision-making authorities. These discussions allowed the plan to better reflect on-the-ground debris management realities and improved alignment between the county and participating stakeholders. The update process also incorporated environmental partners, expanding coordination beyond traditional response agencies. As a result, environmental considerations, such as regulatory compliance were integrated earlier in the planning process, and stronger working relationships were established prior to an incident. During the final stages of the update, the Illinois Public Works Mutual Aid Network (IPWMAN) was engaged to review the plan from a mutual aid perspective, provide best practices, and help validate key planning assumptions. IPWMAN also supported the sharing of a locally developed debris management template and a debris estimator tool with other agencies across the state.
1100 – 1200	We Had a Tornado? Is It Bad? How Bad Is It? – Diamond Phil McCarty On June 18, 2025, a tornado struck Jacksonville and Morgan County, challenging local response and recovery efforts. This session highlights the first critical hours, key decisions, and lessons learned to strengthen community resilience for future severe weather events. The lessons learned from how fast things are ok to Not OK and steps that can be taken to lessen the impact of future events. How the after action can lead to real action.
1100 – 1200	2-1-1 Disaster Box Card – Emerald Chelsea Bowne, Loren Yaksich, Michelle Allen, Sarah Oprzedek, & Dawn Evans Looking to streamline your recovery process after disaster strikes? Hear how local community partners worked together to do just that?and how a boxcard approach helps shorten recovery timelines and address community needs faster. Attendees will receive a practical product they can implement directly within their own jurisdiction to streamline recovery efforts.

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Thursday	April 16, 2026
1100 – 1200	Disaster Considerations for Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSHN) – Jade – Erica Popovsky & Vishal Naik We will discuss disaster considerations for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHN) across the disaster cycle. We will highlight the need for pediatric disaster planning generally and focus on unique disaster considerations for CYSHN including access and functional needs, drill modifications and planning, pre-hospital and hospital care, reunification and sheltering needs. We will discuss pre-hospital preparedness strategies through EMS training and education. We will provide learners with resources for potential partnerships to help with disaster planning and response for this high-risk population. This will be an interactive session with polling questions throughout and a Q&A afterwards.
1200 – 1300	Lunch on your own
1200 – 1630	Legislative Day at the Capitol and Stratton Building
1300 – 1400	DuSMART-DuPage School Mutual Aid Response Team – Northfield 1 Ballroom – Geoffrey Cooker & Amber Quirk Explanation of what DuSMART is, how it will operate, and what it brings to the table. Encouragement to create similar SMARTs within the State of Illinois that can work together to keep our school communities safe.
1400 – 1500	The Calm Before the Storm - Communicating through Crisis – Northfield 1 Ballroom – Stacey Macchi A crisis doesn't wait for you to be ready; it demands a response the moment it strikes. Go beyond basic damage control and explore the critical stages of communication before, during, and after a crisis. You'll learn how to audit your current crisis communication plan and craft resonant messages under pressure. Leave this session with the confidence to lead your community through the unexpected.
1500 – 1530	Break with Exhibitors – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2
1530 – 1630	Growth after Trauma: Prepare now, so you are Ready Later – Northfield 1 Ballroom – Gwen Martin A Police Captain/City Emergency Manager was involved in an officer-involved shooting in Cottage Grove, MN. Provides a first-hand account of the incident, including audio and video, and underscores the importance of mental health resources for involved personnel. Examines post-traumatic growth, or positive psychological change resulting from the struggle with trauma. EMs regularly face critical incidents and cumulative stress. Emphasizes recognizing those impacts and proactively supporting mental wellness through collaboration with mental health professionals and annual "neck-up" checkups to strengthen recovery and resilience.
1700 – 2000	Hospitality Room – Northfield 2 Game Night – Part 2?? <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sponsored by ???</i></p>

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Friday	April 17, 2026
0800 – 0900	<p>From Curious to Competent, Practical AI Applications for EM – Crystal Allison Anderson and Tom Sivak</p> <p>AI is becoming a practical tool for EM, but many professionals remain unsure how to use it in daily operations. This interactive session introduces AI in clear terms and highlights real-world applications across preparedness, response, recovery, and routine work. Participants will explore how AI can automate tasks, enhance situational awareness, and support decision-making in resource-constrained environments. The session emphasizes responsible adoption and demonstrates how faster information processing can create more space for critical thinking and effective leadership.</p>
0800 – 0900	<p>Monsters, Machines, and Mastery: Building Resilient Emergency Management for a World That Won't Wait – Diamond Natalie Wiza</p> <p>EMs excel at creating plans, systems, and technologies; but struggle with what comes next. Using Frankenstein, Jurassic Park, and HAL 9000 as diagnostic frameworks, this session examines three resilience failures: building without maintaining (the abandoned monster), controlling instead of adapting (chaos finds a way), and delegating judgment to technology without accountability (the machine decides). Participants gain practical frameworks for stewardship, adaptive leadership, and ethical decision-making in an era where threats evolve faster than our planning cycles. Includes audit tools for evaluating organizational resilience.</p>
0800 – 0900	<p>Preparedness: Built by Communities, Not Just Guidelines – Emerald Christy Ciccotelli</p> <p>When it comes to preparedness, the FEMA document, “A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action” is the ideal. However, due to staff, budget, and time constraints it often feels overwhelming. We have all the pieces; we just need to find a way to make them work for us. The same basic principles will be there, but what is built will look different for everyone. My specific role allows me to create and strengthen preparedness initiatives and programs that focus on Whole Community.</p>
0800 – 0900	<p>Seeing the Disaster Clearly: Modern Disaster Assessment for Local Governments – Jade Brian Nestler & Fernanda Kuzuhara</p> <p>Disaster assessment is shifting from field-based inspections to data-driven analysis through tools like GIS, drones, and satellite imagery. As federal assistance becomes less predictable, local governments must strengthen their own assessment capabilities. This session explores how modern technology can improve the speed, accuracy, and credibility of information that guides response and recovery decisions. Participants will also examine workforce, data, and privacy challenges while learning how to move beyond damage counting toward actionable decision intelligence.</p>

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Friday	April 17, 2026
0900 – 0930	Break with Exhibitors – Exhibition Hall – Northfield 2
0930 – 1000	Ins and Outs of the Illinois Professional Emergency Manager – Northfield 1 Ballroom Lisa Shelbourne & Mick Fleming Learning the ins and outs of applying for the Illinois Professional Emergency Manager. How to prepare your packet, what is needed, how it should look, and all the questions in between.
1000 – 1100	Community Organizations Active in Disaster – Northfield 1 Ballroom Brian Burgess & Orval Rowe The Southern Illinois Regional Organizations Active in Disaster (SIRCOAD) is in its second year of operation. The Executive Committee works collaboratively to unite community organizations active in disaster response in support of six counties and two municipal EMs during times of disaster. Currently, SIRCOAD represents twelve community organizations. The Executive Committee has focused on establishing bylaws, developing a sustainable funding mechanism, expanding membership, and preparing Emergency Operations Plan annexes specific to Volunteer Reception Centers, Donations Management and Long-term recovery committees.
1100 – 1200	Leading in Uncertain Times – Northfield 1 Ballroom Tom Sivak Emergency Management is different today than it was 2, 5, and 10 years ago. Today, more than ever, Emergency Managers are faced with reduced budgets, lack of staffing, funding cuts yet are responsible for the coordination of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation throughout communities. Leading in Uncertain Times takes a 3-fold approach, the first is to focus on self, team and others, the second is to focus on where it is to lead in evolving threat environments from natural to human induced, and the third is wrapping technology into our world every day. Each of these areas will provide first-hand account of the experiences and opportunities we have today in preparation for tomorrow.
1200 – 1215	Closing Comments – Northfield 1 Ballroom Daniel Eder - President
1300 – 1500	Executive Board Meeting

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