



EMERGENCY SERVICES CONFERENCE | SEPTEMBER 5-6, 2025 SPEAKERS

Location: Keystone Centre, Brandon, MB.

Steve Howe

What's Your WHY?

This keynote tells the story of Steve Howe's early career in the construction industry when he thought the rules and best practices to be safe did not apply to him. Like many workers, he never imagined he would fall victim to a workplace accident that would almost cost him his life. Steve's story of the tragic accident, his long recovery, and his return to work will inspire audiences to learn the reasons WHY Steve now works safely.

Steve shares how he uses a combination of his experience as a Safety Director and the story of his avoidable accident to inspire his own team to work safely and how he achieves his number one professional goal; creating ZERO accident workplaces. With 15 years on construction sites since his accident, Steve knows the safety challenges facing construction projects and the people working on them. His keynote not only inspires audiences to think about WHY they should work safely but he also shares how to establish a culture of safety by keeping it simple and making every word count.

Dr. David Griffin

Dr. David Griffin is the Assistant Chief of Administration in Charleston, South Carolina. He was the operator of the first due engine on June 18, 2007, when nine of his fellow firefighters perished. He has come through the ranks in Operations in every uniformed position from Firefighter to Assistant Chief during his 19-year career in Charleston.

He has a Bachelor's Degree in education from The Citadel, a Master's Degree in Executive Fire Service Leadership, and a Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership and Development.

His keynote address is called: *In Honor of The Charleston 9: A Study of Change Following Tragedy*.

Attendants are taken on an emotional ride from June 18, 2007, in Charleston, SC where nine firefighters perished in the line of duty to today where the organization is now a national model for progress in operations, community risk reduction, firefighter health, and leadership. All organizations can learn life-altering lessons from Charleston to ensure that they do not experience this type of tragic incident.

Breakout Session: Leaders During this highly interactive and scenario-based program, attendees will develop their leadership skills in a supportive environment with their peers alongside a modern leader who has 22 years of Principled Leadership experience with the education to coincide. A fire will be sparked inside of each attendee while also offering them a chance to develop in a fun, productive, modern and challenging class.

John Robertson

In a world where unpredictability and challenges are constants, developing a resilient in a profession where unpredictability and high-stakes challenges are the norm, resilience is often seen as the ultimate goal — but why stop there? This keynote challenges participants to move beyond mere survival and embrace a mindset of growth, purpose, and collective strength. Drawing from *Run Toward the Roar* and *Living the I AM Life in an I HAVE Culture*, it introduces a four-stage approach to facing life's critical moments head-on, transforming crises into catalysts for personal and team growth. Participants will learn to shift from reacting to thriving, building purpose-driven leadership, a sense of belonging, and a culture where people don't just endure — they thrive.

Breakout Session Boost Your Battery: Thriving in Emergency Services

Emergency services demand constant readiness, often pushing first responders to power through adversity without addressing the toll it takes. This workshop uses sports analogies and the personal battery metaphor to help you stay charged — not just for yourself but for those who rely on you. Through practical strategies, you'll start to clarify your focus, define your values, build a personalized VERI PLAN, and master the essentials of long-term well-being. Walk away with concrete steps to boost your resilience and create a lasting positive impact on your loved ones, team, and community.

Scott Wilkinson

Scott Wilkinson is a 33-year veteran of the fire and paramedic service and currently serves as the Deputy Chief of Fire Rescue Operations & Training for the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service. Scott previously served as the Assistant Chief, Community Risk Reduction and prior to that as the Project Manager for Training and Safety Equipment.

Performance and Wellbeing: A Leadership Mantra

Why are you here? This seems somewhat philosophical but really, why are you a leader in the fire service if not to ensure the performance and wellbeing of your team. Yes, you are managing an organization, but your primary focus must remain on this and the majority of your direction and decision making can and should be based on whether it serves the performance and wellbeing of your people. It is time to reflect and ensure this is and remains your leadership mantra.

We all know the most important resource in any department is its people, but do they remain your priority? Does their performance and wellbeing guide your strategy and decision making or have budgets, policy and politics taken precedence. Let's go back to why you are here and examine how to best care for this valuable resource. Motivation, productivity, excellence, discipline, trust, morale, customer service and more are best addressed by going back to the core question of "Does this have a positive impact on the performance and wellbeing of my people?"

Terry Skipper

Terry Skipper is the Provincial Manager of Emergency Response and Recovery for Shared Health, Manitoba, and provides health emergency management leadership that ensures the safety of patients, residents, clients, and staff and the continuity of health services in Manitoba during emergencies. Terry has extensive knowledge of the healthcare sector, with 15 years of emergency response experience and front-line experience as an intermediate-care paramedic. He has a master's degree in disaster and emergency management, a paramedicine diploma, and a qualified agile project manager from the University of Toronto. More recently, Terry embarked on a new journey as a firefighter recruit with the Steinbach Fire Department.

Carberry Bus Accident, a Multi-Agency Response to the Most Fatal Accident in Manitoba

Mass casualty incidents (MCIs) have become a growing concern in many locations where natural and human-caused incidents are increasing. A mass casualty incident can overwhelm local, regional and provincial resources.

A community's ability to cope with such events depends on several factors, including its first responder resources and response time and the health system's capacities and capabilities to handle a sudden surge in demand from patients with resource-intensive and specialized medical needs. The efficient management of critical resources, such as staff, supplies, equipment, and space, is crucial to meeting surge demand requirements. Effective response by the first responders and the health care system is fundamental to mitigating indirect loss of life and life-impacting injuries associated with MCIs. A successful MCI response depends on a tiered multiagency response, which starts with a call to 911.

Jeff Martin will be joining Terry Skipper for this presentation.

Jeff Martin

Jeff Martin is the Provincial Director of Emergency & Continuity Management at Shared Health Manitoba, bringing over 22 years of healthcare experience with a strong background in emergency and disaster management, policy development, and quality improvement. He has played critical roles in the development and implementation of emergency preparedness and disaster response strategies at both local and provincial levels.

Jeff has expertise in the health Incident Command System (ICS), leadership, risk assessment, business continuity planning, and interagency coordination. He has contributed to major emergency response efforts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, mass casualty incidents, and high-consequence pathogen strategic planning, while also leading numerous provincial and local health ICS activations.

Sarah Peto

Sarah Peto is an Acting Lieutenant II in Brandon Fire and Emergency Services with 24 years of service. Sarah was the second woman hired in her department and the first female officer. Sarah graduated from the Manitoba Emergency Services College in 2001. She obtained a 4 yr, BA in Applied Disaster and Emergency Services while working full time. Sarah is a committed and avid volunteer in the community, serving on the United Way executive board and Community Campaign Chair. Sarah has also led mental health wellness by spearheading peer support and debriefings in her department through her work with Project Resilience 911, a multi-agency first responder mental health resource group in the Brandon Area. This last year Sarah has collaborated with many amazing women to bring an organization of support, inclusion, and camaraderie to women in Western Canada to form Fire Service Women Central Provinces.

Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in the Manitoba Fire Service

Women and minorities remain underrepresented in fire services, yet they are shaping the future of the profession in meaningful ways. This session highlights the creation and role of organizations like Fire Service Women Central Provinces in fostering a more inclusive fire service.

Explore the challenges female firefighters and leaders face in diverse fire departments—from rural to urban settings. Learn how to tackle some of these obstacles, drive cultural shifts, and pave the way for a more resilient and equitable fire service.

This session is for all fire service leaders and team members committed to fostering a supportive, forward-thinking environment. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of gender dynamics in fire services and leave with actionable strategies to promote diversity and inclusion in their own organizations.

Danna Twerdoski

Danna has been with the Brandon Communication Center for almost 17 years. She has extensive experience in all areas of the emergency communications center and has acted in several capacities including supervising, training and recently became the Quality Assurance/Training Coordinator. Danna has seen many changes from when she started to now, not only in communications, but with the fire service as well.

Behind the Scenes: The Essential Work of 911 Communication Centers

In this presentation, we'll highlight the important but often unseen work of the 911 communication center. While first responders are in the field, 911 dispatchers manage calls, coordinate resources, and ensure a quick response. We'll explore the challenges dispatchers face, the technology we use, and how we stay calm during crises. Attendees will gain a better understanding of the processes behind every emergency call, from intake to dispatch.

Jason Shaw

Jason Shaw is a Deputy Chief with the City of Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) responsible for Safety, Emergency Management and Public Information. Deputy Shaw has over twenty-five years of emergency services experience as both a firefighter, paramedic and emergency manager, and serving in Rural Manitoba, the Department of National Defense and the City of Winnipeg. Deputy Shaw has served on special rescue teams and has completed multiple tactical training programs related to emergency services and emergency management and has led in several major crisis events.

Leading Through Crisis – When the Incident Command System Fails

In almost every major crisis incident or disaster that has gone wrong the after action reports and inquiries focus on a breakdown of communication and how the Command Structure failed or didn't serve the situation. This session will describe and look at case studies of previous large scale incidents and examine why they failed and provide several tools to effectively prevent or reduce the impacts to your community. We will cover topics like the proper process to form Unified Command, Five Crisis leadership lessons for every disaster, the gap between the EOC and the front lines, and plan stacking. We will explore cognitive bias, ego tactics, the POP-DOC loop and the PSESII factors as we learn how to lead through crisis.

Kathleen Martin

Kathleen Martin, CPHI(C), is the Housing Program Coordinator with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, in the Population and Public Health Branch. As a front-line public health inspector, she responds to various hoarding and severe squalor conditions. She is now responsible for overseeing the housing program and developing the PMIHC documents to a provincial protocol.

The Prairie Mountain InterAgency Hoarding Coalition (PMIHC) has developed two resource guides; "First Responders Guide – For Police, Fire and EMS personnel when discovering situations involving Hoarding or Severe Squalor during 911 Type Calls", and "Protocol & Resource Guide – An Inter-Agency Protocol and Resource Listing for responding to cases of severe Hoarding or Domestic Squalor in Western Manitoba." These documents were developed through an interactive process with improvements made based on years of collaborative case management experience and learning. The PMIHC Guides have proven to be a valuable resource for agencies in their response to severe hoarding and domestic squalor, and especially in cases involving an animal component, since their inception. For that reason, by the Fall 2025, the two resource documents will become provincial protocols and guides. As police, fire and EMS personnel often are the first to discover hoarding and severe squalor situations, this presentation will provide tools for first responders in initial assessment, responding and reporting of the hoarding / squalor situation.

These resource guides support collaborative approaches to complex multijurisdictional challenges and embody both “One Health” and “One Welfare” approaches which acknowledges the interconnections between humans and animals whether it be specific to health or wellbeing. No one agency or organization has the resources or mandate to respond to all aspects of these events and operating in isolation leads to inadequate or poorly aligned actions with subpar outcomes for both the responders and those they are there to assist. When timely collaboration is possible, unintended negative consequences can be mitigated which improves the overall outcomes in a more sustainable manner which protects the client, improves program efficiency while also supporting the psychological health of the responders.

Michael Lees

Michael Lees is a proud member of Brandon Fire and Emergency Services (BFES) and has served the city of Brandon for over 16 years in fire and EMS operations, fire prevention, fire investigation, and was a devoted member of the high angle and confined space team. Through his dedication to safety, education, and team collaboration, Michael continues to make a meaningful impact in both fire prevention and emergency response. Beyond his operational skills, Michael is deeply committed to improving well-being within the department. As part of BFES’s Peer Support Team, he collaborated efforts to mitigate occupational stress injuries and promote mental health awareness.

Building a Peer Support Team: From Concept to Reality

This presentation will focus on the step-by-step development of an effective and accessible peer support team. It highlights the transition from an initial idea to a fully operational team, emphasizing practical implementation. Concepts discussed will include conducting a needs assessment to understand your organizational requirements and compiling resources, including how to create your own comprehensive resource guide and how to collaborate with other organizations.

Julia Senchuk

Julia Senchuk is a Psychotherapist, offering counselling and educational services to the Westman area through her practice, *JKSenchuk Counselling*. With a Master of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology, Julia began her career, within the public sector. By 2011, she made the move to private practice, where she continues her work today. Julia is certified member of the Canadian Counselling Psychological Association.

Developing Successful Mindsets

This workshop explores the concepts of positive and negative thinking, and how our mindsets can impact our daily lives. This workshop will explore the following: am I a ‘positive’ or a ‘negative’ thinker?, myths and facts about positive and negative thinking, what does it mean to be optimistic?, common characteristics of negative thinking, how to change negative mindsets, and develop successful mindsets.

Geoff Murphy

Geoff Murphy is the owner of Master Your Medics and has been a flight paramedic for over a decade. Driven by a passion for clinical excellence, he has spent his career delivering high-quality education to grow our new generation of paramedics.

Geoff will delve into the critical role of end-tidal CO₂ (ETCO₂) monitoring in guiding resuscitation efforts, with a focus on optimizing patient outcomes during cardiac arrest. He will be exploring how effective crew resource management strategies can enhance team performance under pressure using tools like ETCO₂. By blending his extensive hands-on experience with research-based best practices, Geoff equips paramedics and other healthcare professionals with the skills and confidence to excel in challenging clinical environments.

Jeff Eyamie

Jeff Eyamie is an air quality scientist based in Winnipeg. He has been working on the health science around wildfire smoke since 2011 and led Health Canada's wildfire smoke response for several years, building national and international partnerships to help Canadians better understand and protect themselves from the health impacts of wildfire smoke.

Most recently, Jeff has been charged with building a national community of practice around improved health protection of drinking water from private wells. Jeff is also a former journalist, communications professional, novelist, and screenwriter.

Providing Cleaner Air Spaces During A Wildfire Smoke Event

With the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfire smoke events resulting in poor air quality conditions, the threat to citizens and communities is also increasing. Providing access to spaces with good indoor air quality can be a key action to support community members when wildfire smoke conditions are causing poor outdoor air quality. The City of Winnipeg and Health Canada partnered on a 2-year project to explore the development of cleaner air spaces in Winnipeg to support citizens when wildfire smoke events cause poor air quality. The speakers will review the science of poor air quality, the impacts on human health, Health Canada's Guidance for Cleaner Air Spaces during Wildfire Smoke Events, and outcomes from the project work the City of Winnipeg undertook to develop a facility evaluation tool and conduct a Clean Air Centre simulation called Exercise AIR Aware.

Mike Olczyk will be presenting with Jeff Eyamie.

Mike Olczyk

Mike Olczyk is the Emergency Management Coordinator for the City of Winnipeg and has been working with the Office of Emergency Management team since 2020. Prior to joining the City of Winnipeg, he spent 14 years working in emergency management with the Province of Manitoba: 3 years as Operations Program Manager at the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization and 11 years as a Disaster Management Specialist at Manitoba Health's Office of Disaster Management.

Mike has been involved in various emergency management events while working in municipal and provincial government including major floods in 2009, 2011 and 2014, wildfire evacuations, building evacuations, critical infrastructure disruptions, train derailments, and infectious disease outbreaks. He also spent 2 years with the Red River Basin Commission as a Watershed Planner and graduated from the University of Manitoba with a bachelor's degree in Geography and a Master's degree in Natural Resources Management.

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Darlene Oshanski

Darlene began her emergency management career as a volunteer for the Canadian Red Cross in both the Winnipeg and Brandon offices. Her passion for humanitarian causes within a hazard landscape led her to pursue a degree in Applied Disaster and Emergency Studies at Brandon University. She spent 9 years working for Manitoba Health's Office of Disaster Management, one of which she served as the Provincial Coordinator for the Psychosocial Flood Response Teams (2012). Currently, she is in her 8th year as a Public Health Emergency Management Coordinator for the Department of Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-term Care. Darlene's interest continues to be in the sociological side of disaster, endeavoring to work with those most impacted, and in search of equitable and environmentally sustainable ways to enhance holistic health resources within the field of emergency management.

Pathogens of Concern – Presentation by Public Health Emergency Management Unit

The control of communicable diseases, especially pathogens of concern, otherwise known as High Consequence Pathogens (HCPs), require the active participation and cooperation of all health-care professionals and practitioners, including first responders. Join Public Health in a discussion about pathogens of concern, including Ebola, measles and others covered under the National Quarantine Act. First responders such as paramedics, firefighters, and emergency personnel in general, are exposed to many infectious diseases in their professional activities, leading to a considerable risk of transmitting infectious diseases to patients in out-of-hospital settings, possibly leading to health care acquired infections in hospitals and the community.

Members of the Public Health Emergency Management Unit will discuss the risks as it relates to first responders and will illustrate examples of *engineering controls* related to prehospital care and transporting of a person under investigation or confirmed patient with HCP. They will also discuss the importance of *administrative controls* which include policies, procedures, education, training, and patient care practices intended to prevent exposure to and/or transmission of an infectious agent during the provision of care and transport.

Kevin Tordiffe will be presenting with Darlene Oshanski.

Kevin Tordiffe

Kevin has worked in the Manitoba healthcare system since the early 90's, having been a paramedic for more than 25 years. Kevin has worked as an educator, a program director, in policy and compliance and is now the Public Health Emergency Management Lead for the Province of Manitoba. Kevin holds a master's degree in Disaster and Emergency Management and has focused his studies on building organizational resilience in systems. Kevin is also currently the National Co-chair of the Public Health Emergency Management working group under the Public Health National Council.

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Grady Stephenson

Grady has served the community of Carberry and North Cypress-Langford as a member of the Carberry North Cypress-Langford Fire Department for 18 years, with the last 8 as Deputy Chief.

Since the tragic event on June 15th, 2023, Grady has embarked on a personal mental health journey that has taken him through highs and lows, and has accessed a number of resources that are available to first responders in our province. Sharing the story of that day and the months following, has been therapeutic and he hopes that others will seek out the proper supports when needed.

MCI's: Resilience from Tragedy

During this presentation, we will walk through the response and aftermath of the “Carberry Crash,” which took the lives of 17 seniors and changed hundreds of lives from survivors, family, friends, our province, and our brothers and sisters in the first responder family.

From the time of the page, to the months following, we will break down the tactics, challenges, successes, and lessons learned from an operational standpoint. We will discuss the mental health supports that we engaged for our members, and ones that Grady has used personally over the last two years.

Brock Happychuk

Brock Happychuk is a Senior Emergency Management Engagement Specialist with Manitoba Emergency Management Organization. Prior to joining EMO in 2024, he served 24 years in the field of wildland fire as a manager, instructor and firefighter with operational experience across Canada and the United States. Brock's experience has emphasized the value of strong networks and relationships towards effective and efficient emergency management programs. Brock holds BComm (Hons) from University of Manitoba, and has emergency services training as a firefighter, paramedic and has operated in numerous Incident Command System capacities.

Another Tool in the Box: An Overview of the National Public Alerting System in Manitoba

Timeliness and reach are critical in providing potentially life-saving information to Canadians. The National Public Alerting System, also known as Alert Ready, delivers emergency alert messaging to Canadians through television, radio and compatible wireless devices. Launched in 2015, the functionality and application of the Alert Ready system continues to evolve and expand.

As the managing authority for Manitoba's Alert Ready program, AlertMB, EMO will provide an overview of the program including a brief history, how the system works, the various types of emergency alerts, system governance, jurisdictional authority, provincial and territorial program models, and the direction of alerting in Manitoba.

Phillip Primeau

Phillip Primeau is currently an Engagement Strategist at Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (EMO). He has a background and experience in education, community engagement, and public administration. Phil has a Ph.D. and an M.A. in Sociology from Carleton University with research projects that have focused on the broad themes of resilience and community capacity building. His expertise is on the not-for-profit, community, philanthropic, and private insurance sectors' evolving roles in municipal governance and emergency management. Phil continues to teach courses at the university level in sociology, popular culture, and community engagement.

From Bystanders to Effective Partners: Volunteer Integration, Engagement, and Empowerment for 21st Century Emergency Management.

This session explores the evolving role of volunteers in emergency preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery. Through expert-led discussions and participant engagement, attendees will gain insights into effective volunteer management components, such as, recruitment, retention, training, and coordination strategies. The session highlights lessons learned from past emergency responses, best practices for community capacity-building, and innovative approaches to integrating volunteers into emergency management programs. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies and join a network of professionals committed to strengthening volunteer engagement and empowerment for 21st Century Emergency Management.

Lionel Crowther

On Feb. 4, 2007, a tragic fire changed the lives of the Crowther Family. Lionel and four other firefighters were caught in a flashover, where he suffered severe burns to 70% of his body. Tragically, Captain Lessard and Captain Nichols did not survive.

Since that incident, Lionel, his wife Joanna & their family have epitomized the meaning of resiliency, hope and survival. Lionel's family is his greatest love. The many challenges and triumphs their family has faced because of this tragic incident as a Fire Family, has created a family of survivors!

Lionel met Oscar Barrera, a fellow fire fighter burn survivor, introducing Lionel into the world of peer support for burn injured fire fighters. He realized he wasn't alone and found his purpose after his burn. Lionel's passion for Peer Support for burn injured fire fighters and their families has created a new sense of duty for Lionel & the Crowther family. The Crowther family were recognized with the prestigious John A. Moncrief Award from his Peers and the American Burn Association.



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