

9TH ANNUAL

PENNSYLVANIA

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND HOMELAND SECURITY

Conference

September 27 – 29, 2026

Blair County Convention Center

Altoona, PA



**STRENGTHENING
CONNECTIONS**

ADDRESSING THE THREATS OF TOMORROW

Call for Presentations

KEYSTONE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

www.KEMAConference.com

Call for Speakers & Presentations

The Keystone Emergency Management Association (KEMA) invites you to share your expertise and contribute to the emergency management community by submitting a presentation proposal for the **9th Annual Pennsylvania Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security Conference, #KEMACon2026**. The Conference will be held on September 27th to 29th in Altoona, Pennsylvania, at the Blair County Convention Center. With the theme “**Strengthening Connections, Assessing the Threats of Tomorrow,**” the conference will highlight the critical need to build relationships and proactively identify emerging threats to improve emergency management across the state. Join over 300 emergency management professionals at #KEMACon2026 and share your knowledge by submitting a proposal today.

Speaker Call

The Call for Speakers will be open on January 5, 2026, through April 20, 2026, at 5:00 PM Eastern Time. Please note that all applications must be submitted by the deadline and no exceptions will be made. If you are submitting multiple presentations, please fill out a separate application for each presentation. Breakout sessions are limited to a maximum of 60 minutes, including time for Q&A, so please structure your presentation accordingly. **Presentations longer than 60 minutes will not be considered.**

With over 300 emergency management professionals expected to attend #KEMACon2026, this is an excellent opportunity to educate your peers and contribute to the field. Don't miss out on this chance to showcase your expertise and insights on emergency management practices and technology within the conference theme of "Strengthening Connections, Assessing the Threats of Tomorrow." Submit your proposal before the deadline to be considered for the conference program.

Conference Focus

To ensure your presentation is relevant to the diverse audience at the **9th Annual Pennsylvania Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security Conference**, we encourage you to utilize the theme, "**Strengthening Connections, Assessing the Threats of Tomorrow**" in developing your presentation. Your presentation should address the challenges faced by the emergency preparedness and homeland security community and offer solutions for overcoming these obstacles. In addition, please consider tailoring your presentation to appeal to a broad range of attendees, including but not limited to:

- Government emergency managers
- Disaster planners
- Homeland security professionals
- Communications system specialists/9-1-1 Coordinators
- Crisis and risk managers
- Business continuity planners
- Health and human services providers
- Public safety chief officers/directors
- Educational institutions
- Healthcare disaster professionals
- Meteorologists
- Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

PA EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & HOMELAND SECURITY CONFERENCE 2026

Call for Speakers & Presentations

The results of the 2025 KEMA Conference survey indicated the following topics are most requested and thus, presentations related to these topics may receive preference:

- Case Studies
- Private Sector Integration and Partnerships
- Artificial Intelligence in Emergency Preparedness
- Safe Schools
- Mass Communication Notification
- Resilience
- Cybersecurity
- Non-Profits in Emergency Preparedness
- Emerging Technology
- Volunteer Engagement & Recruitment

Educational Tracks

Technology & The Future of Response: This track addresses the "Tomorrow" part of the Conference theme, focusing on how rapidly evolving tech is changing the field.

- **Suggested Topics:** Practical AI in the EOC, NextGen 911 integration, drone/UAS operations for search and rescue, and using GIS for real-time infrastructure resilience.
- **Target Audience:** Tech-forward emergency managers, IT/GIS specialists, and public safety directors.

Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Resilience: As cyber threats become more sophisticated, this track focuses on protecting the "connections" that keep our communities running.

- **Suggested Topics:** Securing municipal water and power grids, responding to ransomware in local government, public-private partnerships for critical infrastructure, and "old-school" backup comms when the grid fails.
- **Target Audience:** Homeland security officials, utility managers, and municipal leaders.

Community-Centric Preparedness: This aligns with "Strengthening Connections" by focusing on the people we serve.

- **Suggested Topics:** Planning for Pennsylvania's aging population, equitable disaster recovery in rural vs. urban settings, managing "spontaneous volunteers," and effective crisis communication in a world of social media misinformation.
- **Target Audience:** VOAD partners, public information officers (PIOs), and community outreach coordinators.

Holistic Health & Workforce Sustainability: A major trend for 2026 is the staffing crisis and mental health of responders.

- **Suggested Topics:** Addressing the first responder staffing shortage, peer support programs for trauma, leadership succession planning for KEMA's next generation, and burnout prevention during long-duration incidents.
- **Target Audience:** Agency leads, HR professionals, and wellness coordinators.

Tactical & Operational Excellence: Always a staple at the Conference, this keeps the focus on core competencies.

- **Suggested Topics:** Active shooter/threat response at mass gatherings (like the 2026 World Cup events or PA fairs), hazardous materials (HAZMAT) rail/road safety, and complex weather pattern response (extreme heat and flash flooding).
- **Target Audience:** Police, Fire, EMS, and field-level emergency coordinators.

Case Studies / "Wildcard": Analyze real-world after-action reports and obscure "black swan" events to extract unconventional solutions and critical thinking skills necessary for modern crisis management.

- **Suggested Topics:** Lessons learned from rare, high-impact events, honest "Hot Washes" of Pennsylvania-specific incidents from the past 12 months, and case studies on working with non-traditional stakeholders.
- **Target Audience:** Emergency Management Coordinators looking for fresh perspectives, Planners and Training Officers responsible for writing After-Action Reports (AARs), and Operational leads who enjoy tactical problem-solving and critical-thinking exercises

Key Dates

Call for Presentations Opens	January 5, 2026
Submission Deadline	April 20, 2026
Speakers Notified of Selection	By May 4, 2026
Speaker Registration Deadline	Before August 10, 2026

**Subject to scheduling changes*

Tips for Completing the Application

- Read all instructions carefully.
- Complete all fields.
- Double check for typos before you submit – they **will** decrease your score.

Scoring Applications

Applications are scored based on: A complete and accurate application – **INCOMPLETE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE DISQUALIFIED AND REMOVED FROM REVIEW**

- Quality of submitted presentation
- Speaker experience and qualifications related to the topic
- Compelling presentation “story” that will engage the audience
- Adherence to the theme, “Strengthening Connections, Assessing the Threats of Tomorrow”

Proposal Submission

Online Application: <https://bit.ly/KEMA2026CallForSpeakers>

The application requires submission of:

- Primary Contact (Name, Organization, Job Title, E-Mail, and Phone)
 - This individual will be the primary contact and is responsible for forwarding correspondence from the Conference Committee to the presenters.
- Speaker(s) (Name, Organization, Job Title, E-Mail, Phone, and Biography)
- Presentation (Title, Objectives, Description, and Educational Track)

After Your Proposal is Selected

Registration and Deadlines: The selection of presenters and alternates will be completed by **May 4, 2026**. All accepted presenters must register for the conference by the **August 10, 2026**, deadline.

- **Failure to register by this date will result in the presenter being excluded from the program, and an alternate presenter will be selected.**

Speaker Compensation and Costs: We appreciate your willingness to contribute your expertise to the emergency management community.

- **Benefit:** As a token of appreciation, up to two speakers per presentation will be granted a 50% discounted conference registration.
- **Speaker Costs:** KEMA does not offer an honorarium, and all presentations are provided on a voluntary, "pro bono" basis. Presenters are responsible for covering all associated costs, including their registration, accommodations, travel, and meals.
- **Action:** Upon notification of acceptance, presenters are advised to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements.

Presentation and A/V Guidelines:

- **Non-Commercial Content:** Presentations must be educational in nature and may not be used for the direct promotion of a speaker's products or services.
- **Equipment Provided:** The conference will provide a PC-compatible computer, projector, and screen.
- **Equipment Required from Speaker:** Presenters must bring their presentation on a USB drive. Any additional equipment, such as audio speakers or easel boards, must be provided by the presenter.

Contact

All inquiries regarding speakers and presentations shall be directed to:

- Robert Gerlach, E-mail: Conference@KEMAConference.com

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why are speakers charged a registration fee rather than receiving a complimentary pass?

In previous years, when registration was complimentary, the conference experienced frequent speaker no-shows without prior communication, leaving significant voids in the educational programming. Since implementing a 50% discounted registration fee for up to two speakers per presentation, we have had no instances of no-shows for breakout sessions.

Additionally, the costs of hosting this event continue to rise. KEMA is committed to keeping attendance costs as low as possible for all emergency management professionals. This nominal fee helps minimally cover rising operational costs while ensuring a committed and reliable speaker lineup.

2. Do I receive any compensation or travel reimbursement?

All presentations are provided on a voluntary, "pro-bono" basis. KEMA does not offer honorariums, and presenters are responsible for all associated costs, including their discounted registration, travel, accommodations, and meals.

3. What is the deadline for submitting a proposal?

The Call for Speakers is open from January 5, 2026, through April 20, 2026, at 5:00 PM Eastern Time. No exceptions will be made for late submissions.

4. How long should my presentation be?

Breakout sessions are limited to a maximum of 60 minutes, which must include time for Q&A. Presentations proposed for longer than 60 minutes will not be considered.

5. Can I submit more than one topic?

Yes. However, you must fill out a separate application for each individual presentation you wish to propose.

6. When will I find out if I've been selected?

Speakers will be notified of their selection status by May 4, 2026.

7. What equipment is provided in the session rooms?

The conference provides a PC-compatible computer, a projector, and a screen. Presenters are required to bring their final presentation on a USB drive. Any additional equipment, such as audio speakers or easels, must be provided by the speaker.

8. Can I promote my company's products during the session?

No. Presentations must be educational in nature and cannot be used for the direct promotion of a speaker's products or services.

About KEMA

At the Keystone Emergency Management Association (KEMA), our **mission** is to promote and enhance the capabilities and expertise of emergency management professionals and volunteers across Pennsylvania. We believe that by working together and sharing information, we can better protect lives and property from both natural and man-made disasters. Our focus is on education, collaboration, and building partnerships with emergency response organizations to achieve this goal.

Our **vision** is to be a leading and results-driven organization of emergency management professionals, recognized for our commitment to excellence in preparing for and responding to emergencies. We strive to be a trusted resource for the Pennsylvania emergency management community, providing training, guidance, and support that helps to build a more resilient Commonwealth.

www.KEMA-PA.org