Second Annual

Tribal Emergency Management CONFERENCE

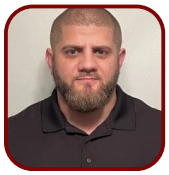
October 21-22, 2026

Pechanga Resort Casino
Temecula, California

Wednesday, October 21

8:00 - 9:00 AM | **Registration and Networking Breakfast**

9:00 - 9:15 AM | **Welcoming Remarks**



Joe Baranello
Sponsor Sales Director
Native Nation Events

9:15 - 10:30 AM | **The Role of Tribal Leadership in Emergency Management**

Tribal emergency managers are responsible for protecting tribal members, land, and resources through planning, responding to, and recovering from natural and man-made disasters. Attendees will come away with the knowledge of:

- The importance and benefits of a dedicated Emergency Action Plan
- What strong partnerships and MOUs with State, Local and Federal partners enhance preparedness (and building those relationships before they're needed)
- Having the right equipment for the job, or knowing where to access the resource from
- How vital continued and relevant training for all personnel is to success
- Ways to bolster an emergency management budget through grant funding

MODERATOR:



Starla Halcomb PhD
Chief Executive Officer
LEAD Training

SPEAKERS:



Tim Zientek
Director of Emergency Management
Citizen Potawatomi Nation



David Ellsworth
Emergency Manager
Morongo Band of Mission Indians



Michael Gates
Director of Emergency Management
Seneca Nation of Indians

Wednesday, October 21

10:30 - 11:00 AM

Morning Networking Break

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Strategic Emergency Planning for Tribal Communities and Their Enterprises

Tribes face growing threats that require strong planning and preparedness. Attendees will come away with a better understanding of risk assessments, emergency planning, team building, and funding strategies to strengthen preparedness.

- How can Tribes evaluate risks from disasters, cyber threats, and public health emergencies?
- What common gaps do you see in community emergency plans, and how can leaders address them before an emergency occurs?
- With FEMA providing $13.5 million through the FY 2025 Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program, how can Tribes position themselves to compete for and secure federal emergency management grants?
- How do you know you are building the right team and clearly defining roles before a disaster occurs?

MODERATOR:



Eddie Ilko
Safety and Occupational Health Manager
National Indian Gaming Commission

SPEAKERS:



Brian Hunt
Security Director
Twin Pine Casino



Leland Thompson
Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director
Coushatta Tribe



Scott Goodwin
Fire Chief
Tule River Indian Tribe of California



Jessica Big Crow
Planning & Coordination Specialist
Oglala Sioux Tribe Emergency Management

Wednesday, October 21

12:00 - 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Operating As One Team - Coordination of Tribal, Local, State, and Federal First Responders

Successful emergency response depends on strong coordination, reliable communication, and unified command. Attendees will hear lessons learned and best practices for improving multi-agency response during emergencies.

- What are the biggest barriers to interagency coordination during an emergency?
- Which shared communication tools or radio channels actually work during a large-scale event?
- What have we learned from incidents where coordination either succeeded or failed?

MODERATOR:



Matthew Carrier
Vice President of Sales
eConnect Global

SPEAKERS:



Tsosie Wood
Fire Chief
Salt River Fire Department



TJ Sherwood
Lieutenant, Patrol Operations Bureau
Gila RIver Police Department



Scott Goodwin
Fire Chief
Tule River Indian Tribe of California



Lauren Digioia
EMS & Safety Manager
Sycuan Casino Resort

Wednesday, October 21

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Indian Country Is Burning - What Have Tribes Learned from Wildfires On and Off the Reservation

As wildfire threats grow across Indian Country, Tribes are adapting to new challenges in preparedness and response. Attendees will gain practical lessons, strategies, and technologies to strengthen wildfire readiness and recovery.

- With more than 72,000 wildfires burning over 5 million acres in 2025, what lessons have we learned from recent wildfire events?
- How do limited resources and infrastructure impact Tribal wildfire response efforts?
- How can technology improve Tribal wildfire preparedness and long-term recovery?

MODERATOR:



Eric Barnett
Sales Manager
Dryad Networks/AdaptConn

SPEAKERS:



Jamani Ashe
Community Preparedness & Disaster Management Specialist
Cowlitz Indian Tribe



Monte Bryan
Fire Chief
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians

3:00 - 3:30 PM

Afternoon Networking Break

Wednesday, October 21

3:30- 4:30 PM

Emergency Management Leadership Roundtable - Building Tomorrow's Emergency Management Leaders

This moderator-led, open-floor discussion will feature emergency management leadership who will discuss practical leadership insights on decision-making, team building, stakeholder engagement, and preparing their organizations for future emergency management challenges.

- What leadership skills are critical during a disaster response?
- How do you engage Tribal leadership in emergency planning?
- What strategies have been effective for building and sustaining a strong emergency management team?
- What lessons have you learned from leading through a major emergency or disaster?
- How are you preparing for the next generation of emergency management challenges?

MODERATOR:



Keith Pruett
Vice President of Strategic Partnerships
Garner Environmental Services

SPEAKERS:



Amy Tanner
Director of Emergency Management
Cherokee Nation



Charles Kmet
Emergency Manager
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community



Zuzzette Bricker
Emergency Services Coordinator
Pechanga Fire Department



Jenna Parisien
Emergency Management Director
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

4:30 PM

Day One Concludes

Thursday, October 22

8:00 - 9:00 AM

Registration and Networking Breakfast

9:00 - 10:00AM

Search & Rescue and Missing Persons in Tribal Communities

As disasters grow more complex, Tribes must be ready to locate and protect residents during emergencies. Attendees will learn search-and-rescue strategies, technologies, and lessons learned from past disasters.

- How do disasters such as wildfires, floods, and severe storms change the way Tribes conduct search-and-rescue operations and account for missing persons?
- How are tribes using technologies such as drones, thermal imaging, GIS mapping, and emergency notification systems to locate missing individuals?
- What lessons from past disasters have improved search-and-rescue efforts?
- How can Tribes better prepare for large-scale search-and-rescue operations?

MODERATOR:



Eddie Ilko
Safety and Occupational Health Manager
National Indian Gaming Commission

SPEAKERS:



Deanna Garcia
Emergency Communications Coordinator
Pascua Yaqui Tribe



Emily Sitting Bear
Director/K-9 Handler
MHA Emergency Operations Center
MHA Nation



Joseph Jetty
Fire Chief
Spirit Lake Tribe

Thursday, October 22

10:00 - 10:45 AM

Portable Shelters & Infrastructure for Emergency Response

Portable shelters and temporary infrastructure play a critical role in disaster response and recovery. Attendees will learn how to select, deploy, and maximize these resources during emergencies.

- How can portable shelters and temporary housing solutions support displaced residents following a disaster?
- What factors should organizations consider when selecting temporary systems?
- What operational lessons have emerged from recent temporary infrastructure deployments?
- What are the critical success factors for deploying portable infrastructure within the first 72 hours?

MODERATOR:

Jason Osborne
Chief Strategy Officer
Garner Enviromental Services

SPEAKERS:



David Ellsworth
Emergency Manager
Morongo Band of Mission Indians



Bruce Harvey
Director of Emergency Management
Gila River Indian Community

10:45 - 11:15 AM

Morning Networking Break

Thursday, October 22

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM

Lessons Learned: Strengthening Security After a Cyber Incident

With U.S. cybercrime losses exceeding $20.9 billion in 2025, enterprises face growing cybersecurity threats. Attendees will learn how to strengthen cyber defenses, improve incident response, and prepare for emerging risks.

- In the first 24 hours of a cyber incident, what priorities have the greatest impact on containment and recovery?
- How have past cyber incidents reshaped your approach to risk management, incident response, and business continuity?
- What strategic investments in cybersecurity, workforce development, and operational resilience are most critical for defending gaming enterprises against emerging threats?

MODERATOR:



Chris Bono
Director of Customer Care
ESET - North America

SPEAKERS:



Ivan Devitt
Advisory Board Member
Native Nation Events



Marc Epp
Surveillance Manager
Swinomish Casino & Lodge



Patrick Tinklenberg
Vice President of Information Technology
Sycuan Casino

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch

Thursday, October 22

1:00- 2:00 PM

Strategic Security Innovation: Harnessing Technology to Reduce Risk

Technology is reshaping the future of security and emergency response. Attendees will learn how AI, communications systems, and emerging technologies are improving threat detection, situational awareness, and incident response.

- How is A.I. changing the way your organization detects threats and responds to incidents?
- What communication technologies are most critical during a large-scale emergency?
- How do sirens and emergency lighting systems improve communication and decision-making during critical incidents?
- Looking ahead, what technologies should organizations invest in today to prepare for the future of security and emergency response?

MODERATOR:



Ashley Enstad
Sales Director
Veridocs

SPEAKERS:



Justin Preble
Director of Security
Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises



Chris Watkins
Technology Sales Manager
Whelen Engineering



Mason Lienhart
Surveillance Manager
Cliff Castle Casino Hotel



Andrew Little
Director of Security
Fortune Bay Resort Casino

Thursday, October 22

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Combatting Active Shooter Incidents – Training, Response, & Technology

Active shooter incidents remain a growing concern across the country. In 2025, the FBI reported 34 incidents that resulted in 166 casualties, representing a 42% increase from 2024. The FBI and ALERRT Center documented 223 active shooter incidents between 2020 and 2024. This session will show how you can strengthen preparedness, training, communication, and response capabilities to better protect your enterprise.

- How can you assess whether your team is prepared to respond?
- What scenario-based exercises are most effective?
- What qualifications and training should armed security personnel possess?
- What legal liabilities are faced following an incident, and what proactive measures can reduce those risks?
- What technologies are being used to prevent and respond to active shooter incidents?

MODERATOR:



Eddie Ilko
Safety and Occupational Health Manager
National Indian Gaming Commission

SPEAKERS:



Daryl Canard
Security Training Manager
Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises



Kim Pound
Director of Security
Cliff Castle Casino Hotel



James Gillam
Director of Guest Safety
Pala Casino Spa Golf Resort

Thursday, October 22

3:00 - 3:30 PM

EXHIBIT RAFFLE DRAWING

- **Winners Must Be Present To Win**

3:30 PM

Conference Concludes