

Agenda

Registration & Early Bird Exhibits

8:30 AM

Please stop by our exhibit tables for preparedness information, volunteer opportunities, and free giveaways! Exhibits will be open during breaks and at lunch. Don't forget to get your exhibit card signed for a chance to win a raffle prize at the end of the workshop!

Welcome

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino- Tarrant

The Plainfield Tornado: 35 Years of Advancement in Severe Weather Forecasting and Preparedness

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Zachary Yack & Mike Bardou - National Weather Service

Join us for a look back at the meteorology of the Plainfield tornado and see how severe weather forecasting, detection, and communication have advanced in the last 35 years. We'll also take an updated look at some of the data that was available at the time, revisit the track of the tornado, and explore which areas of present-day Plainfield were impacted. Finally, we will outline how to be weather aware in order to be best protected from severe weather.

Disaster Scam Awareness: Protecting Yourself from Fraud After Crisis

10:45 AM – 11:30 AM

Norman "Skip" Gonsoulin, Jr - Office of the Attorney General

This program will educate the community on common scams that arise before, during, and after disasters. The program helps individuals recognize fraudulent contractors, fake charities, identity theft schemes, and other scams that exploit disaster survivors. Participants learn how to identify red flags, report scams, and protect themselves and their communities from financial and emotional harm.

Thinking in Chaos

11:30AM – 12:15 PM

Kyle Matousek

Throughout his career, Kyle has led teams through some of the most challenging and unpredictable situations imaginable – from military operations in volatile regions to coordinating Fire/EMS response during emergencies. This presentation will share insights from these experiences offering practical strategies, lessons learned, and thought-provoking takeaways that will help navigate high-stress, chaotic environments.

Lunch

12:15 PM – 1:00 PM

A light lunch is being provided by the Salvation Army located on the patio.

Lessons from the Storm: A First Responder's Perspective on Tornado Recovery and Preparedness

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Jackie Palkovitz and Lt. Edward Ludwig – Manhattan Fire Protection District

Join Manhattan Fire's Lieutenant Ludwig as he shares his firsthand experience as a responder during the July 2024 Ranch Oaks tornado's aftermath, providing a unique perspective from both professional and personal standpoint. Discover how emergency operations unfolded, the challenges of recovery efforts, and the critical needs of the community in the wake of disaster. Fire and Safety Educator Jackie Palkovitz will offer practical tips to help you prepare for emergencies and insights into the long and complex rebuilding process. With Lieutenant Ludwig's dual perspectives - as both a first responder and a resident of the impacted subdivision - this session promises to be both compelling and highly informative.

Closing Remarks and Raffle

2:00 PM

Meet your Speakers!

Norman S. Gonsoulin, Jr.
Office of the Attorney General

Norman “Skip” Gonsoulin is currently with the Illinois Attorney General’s Office in the capacity of Sr. Community Outreach Liaison. He has been with the office for the past 20 years. While his primary duty is to serve as a liaison between the seniors in the community and the office of the Attorney General, he also speaks to numerous community groups, civic organizations, churches and of course seniors of all ethnic groups.

Immediately before joining the AG’s office, Skip was a substitute teacher for a year in the Chicago Public Schools system. Before his stint with CPS he spent the last 22 years in the legal field as a Docket Manager for two highly respected law firms. Skip is married to his wife Jacqueline of 32 years, and both are members of Trinity United Church of Christ, led by the Rev. Otis Moss, III. He and his wife have two dogs named Bella & Sugar. Skip is also a Past Master of Ashler Lodge # 139 which is affiliated with the Prince Hall Masons of Illinois.

Lt. Edward F. Ludwig, AAS, PM, CCEMTP, LI
Manhattan Fire Protection District

Edward Ludwig is a dedicated professional with over 24 years of experience in firefighting, emergency medical services, and education. As a Lieutenant and EMS Coordinator with the Manhattan Fire Protection District, he supervises firefighter/paramedics and oversees ALS engine and ambulance operations. At Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, he has spent over 14 years as EMS Education Coordinator, managing the accredited Paramedic Education Program, and recently became EMS System Coordinator, further enhancing regional EMS education and care.

Edward holds an AAS in Fire and Emergency Services from Joliet Junior College and is completing a BS in Fire Service Administration at Waldorf University. A proud U.S. Coast Guard veteran, he served as a Small Boat Engineer and Boarding Officer in search and rescue, law enforcement, and homeland security. His commendations include the Commandant’s Letter of Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal, and Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal.

Recognized for excellence, Edward has earned awards such as EMS of the Year, Officer of the Year, and life-saving commendations. He is an instructor for advanced medical courses and a leader in EMS continuing education. An active member of professional organizations, including the National Association of EMS Educators and the International Association of Fire Fighters, He remains committed to teamwork, education, and continuous improvement.

Kyle Matousek

Emergency Preparedness Professional

Kyle Matousek is a Senior Leader in Fire Safety Administration, Emergency Preparedness Professional and a former Member of the United States Guard with a diverse background in emergency response, task force coordination, and training operations. With extensive experience liaising between firefighters, paramedics, municipal leaders, and community stakeholders, Kyle excels at assessing and mitigating risks to ensure public safety. Known for his strategic insight and ability to act decisively in high-pressure situations, he has earned a reputation as an influential leader and communicator. Kyle's collaborative approach has resulted in multiple honorary awards and recognition for exceptional team leadership and tactical execution in fast-paced environments.

Jackie Palkovitz

Manhattan Fire Protection District

Jackie's journey in the fire service began in 2006, following a role in parks and recreation as the Recreation Coordinator and Race Director for the Channahon Park District. She returned to her true calling in public safety in 2018 and now serves as the Fire and Life Safety Educator and Public Information Officer for the Manhattan Fire Protection District. Her unwavering dedication to community education and her genuine love for teaching make her an indispensable advocate for public safety and well-being. Over the past six years, Jackie has been instrumental in fostering a safer community by imparting essential knowledge and skills to citizens in the Villages of Manhattan and Peotone. Her commitment to education goes beyond the basics, as she holds multiple certifications, including instructor credentials in CPR, Stop the Bleed, and Matter of Balance. She's also a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. With her extensive background in public safety and programming, Jackie has dedicated herself to educating individuals of all ages on crucial fire prevention techniques, injury prevention strategies, and life-saving skills.

In July 2024, during the tornadoes that struck the region, Jackie gained firsthand experience with the profound effects and impact such disasters have on a community. Her recovery efforts in assisting the residents of Ranch Oaks provided her with a unique perspective on disaster preparedness and the challenges of rebuilding after a catastrophe. This experience has deepened her understanding and enhanced her ability to educate others about preparation and resilience in the face of emergencies.




In addition to her professional endeavors, Jackie is an avid volunteer, dedicating much of her life to community service. While she has supported various organizations in Will County, her current focus is on Project Fire Buddies, further exemplifying her commitment to serving others.

Zachary Yack
National Weather Service

Zachary has had a passion for weather since he was four years old and really enjoys the challenges that come with forecasting severe weather. Zachary joined the ranks of NWS Chicago in 2021 after spending fourteen months as an on-air broadcast meteorologist for an ABC affiliate in West Virginia. Prior to beginning his professional career Zachary attended Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida where he obtained his Bachelor of Science Degree in Meteorology in May of 2020 with two minors in Geographic Information Systems and Applied Mathematics. While this is his first time calling the Chicago area home, Zachary is very familiar with the crazy weather the Midwest has to offer as he was born and spent the majority of his life growing up in Flint, Michigan. Outside of work Zachary is an avid car enthusiast and a huge Michigan Wolverine fan who loves watching football and motorsports in his spare time.



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