

2026 SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026

**PETE LIEN & SONS SHOOTING SPORTS COMPLEX
PIEDMONT, SD**



JOIN US THIS OCTOBER!

Connect with firefighters from across South Dakota at the 2026 South Dakota Firefighters Association Annual Conference this October in Piedmont, SD!

The 2026 SDFA Annual Conference is the premier event for South Dakota's fire service, bringing together firefighters, officers, EMS personnel, and industry partners for several days of education, networking, and camaraderie. Attendees can expect high-quality fire and EMS training sessions, informative exhibits, and opportunities to connect with departments from across the state.

Be sure to mark your calendar for October 2-4, 2026, and plan to join us. Registration information, conference details, and lodging accommodations will be available soon, so watch for updates and be sure to register early once registration opens.

We look forward to seeing you this October at the 2026 South Dakota Firefighters Association Annual Conference!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

- 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. SDFA Board of Directors Meetings
1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Joint Council of Emergency Services Meeting
5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Registration Desk & Vendors Open

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2026

- 7:30 - 8:00 a.m. Registration Desk Opens
8:00 - 8:30 a.m. General Membership Meeting & Discussions
8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Bridging the Gap: Connecting, Training, and Leading Every Generation in the Fire Service - *Calen Maningas*
12:00 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch (provided with registration)
1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Through the Smoke: A Family's Journey After Line-of-Duty Death - *Shawn Fischer*
5:00 - 7:30 p.m. Conference & Dear Old Timers Social (*hors d'oeuvres & cash bar*)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Forged by Fire - *Tom Merrill*
12:00 p.m. SDFA General Membership Meeting & Discussions

REGISTER TODAY!

Scan the QR Code below to register or visit www.sdfirefighters.org for more information!

Registration Fee: \$75
Lifetime Members: Free
Exhibitor/Vendor Fee: \$25



LODGING OPTIONS

The South Dakota Firefighters Association does not have an official room block for the 2026 Annual Conference. Attendees are encouraged to make reservations directly with one of the nearby hotels listed below.

Residence Inn by Marriott Rapid City

581 WaTiki Way
Rapid City, SD
(605) 791-9600

Conference Inn & Suites Conference Center Rapid City

1333 N. Elk Vale Road
Rapid City, SD
(605) 608-8576

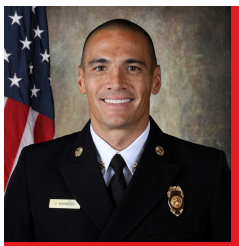
La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham

1416 N. Elk Vale Road
Rapid City, SD
(605) 718-7000

Baymont by Wyndham Rapid City

4040 Cheyenne Boulevard
Rapid City, SD
(605) 5036104

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



CALEN MANINGAS

As a Battalion Chief and 19-year member of the Rapid City Fire Department, Chief Maningas leads 46 personnel across seven stations while serving as a contract instructor for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. He is a member of the South Dakota State Fire Marshals Advisory Board, a nationally published author and speaker, and has presented at Fire Rescue International and the CPSE Excellence Conference on strategic leadership and visionary planning. Holding a master's degree in executive leadership and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation, Chief Maningas believes the example you set should always surpass the authority you are given.

Bridging the Gap: Connecting, Training & Leading Every Generation in the Fire Service

Today's fire service is the first in history to have as many as four generations serving side by side, each bringing different experiences, communication styles, and expectations to the firehouse. This interactive course helps fire service leaders understand generational differences, separate stereotypes from reality, and develop practical strategies to build trust, improve communication, and strengthen team culture. Participants will learn how to effectively train, mentor, and lead firefighters across generations while preserving the traditions and standards of the profession. Whether supervising a single crew or an entire department, attendees will leave with actionable tools to foster accountability, increase engagement, and create a unified team focused on serving the community with excellence.



SHAWN FISCHER

Shawn Fischer has dedicated more than 20 years to serving others through emergency services and healthcare. A member of the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department since 2012, she is a paramedic, nurse, EMS educator, and healthcare leader. Following the line-of-duty death of her husband, Assistant Fire Chief Dave Fischer, in 2018, Shawn has continued to honor his legacy by advocating for firefighter safety, resilience, and rural healthcare. She currently serves as Administrator of Heartland Home Health & Hospice while remaining active as a nurse, paramedic, and supporter of the first responder community.

Through the Smoke: A Family's Journey After Line-of-Duty Death

Passionate about supporting first responders and their families, Shawn speaks from both her professional experience and her personal journey. Her presentation reflects on losing her husband in the line of duty while also exploring resilience, healing, and the strength found in the fire service family. Through her story, she hopes to inspire others to embrace hope, honor those we have lost, and remind every first responder and their loved ones that they never walk the journey alone.



TOM MERRILL

Tom Merrill is a 43-year fire service veteran with the Snyder Fire Department in Amherst, New York, where he served 26 years as a department officer, including 15 years in the chief officer ranks. A former chief of department and current Fire Commissioner for the Snyder Fire District, Tom is a nationally recognized speaker, regular FDIC presenter, podcast host, and author of *The Professional Volunteer Fire Department*. He has delivered fire service programs and keynote presentations across the country, sharing his expertise in volunteer fire service leadership and organizational excellence. Tom also serves full time as the Senior Fire Dispatcher for the Town of Amherst Central Fire Alarm Office, bringing decades of leadership and operational experience to the fire service.

Forged by Fire

The American fire service is built on a rich tradition of honor, sacrifice, and hard-earned lessons that continue to shape the profession today. This engaging presentation explores the pivotal events, historic fires, and influential leaders that every firefighter should know, preserving the stories and lessons that must never be forgotten. Participants will gain a deeper appreciation for the fire service's heritage while learning how history can strengthen decision-making, leadership, and safety for future generations. By honoring the past, attendees will leave better prepared to carry its traditions and lessons forward.