



# 2025 Georgia Fire Service Conference

## September 30 – October 4, 2025

### GPSTC – Forsyth, GA

### Conference Agenda



***All Fire Department events require armband;  
Name badges required for conference events;***

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2025	
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<b>Pre-Conference Class: Essentials of Chaplaincy – Part 1</b> This is part one of a two-day class designed to help train new chaplains.
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	<b>GMAG Meeting</b>
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>Unification Partners Meeting</b>
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<b>Conference Registration Opens</b>
3:30 p.m.	<b>GAFC / GSFA Joint Board Meeting</b>
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2025	
8:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	<b>Welcome &amp; Opening Remarks (Forsyth Representative)</b>  <b>Official Opening of Conference &amp; Keynote Address:</b> <b>Keynote Speaker: Joel Baker</b>
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<b>Pre-Conference Class: Essentials of Chaplaincy – Part 2</b> This is part two of a two-day class designed to help train new chaplains.
9:45 a.m.	<b>Break</b>
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>They don't teach this in Officer Class – Randy Feltner</b> This session offers a candid look at the challenges of stepping into leadership in the fire service. It highlights how titles and certifications don't automatically prepare someone to lead effectively—and how ego can cloud judgment. Drawing from personal experience, the speaker shares how self-reflection and intentional change in attitude, priorities, and purpose led to real improvements both on the job and at home. Attendees will learn simple, practical steps to become more impactful leaders and avoid common missteps as they grow in their careers.  <b>Who's Really Ruining The Fire Service? YOU ARE! – Payton Owens</b> In this impactful two-hour lecture, I will share my personal journey through abuse, addiction, homelessness, and broken families—and how, throughout my struggles, I experienced firsthand how the fire service sometimes let me down. Combining my story with a critical examination of organizational culture, leadership, and individual responsibility, we will explore how firefighters and departments can unintentionally contribute to the very problems they aim to solve. Attendees will gain insight into the importance of self-awareness, accountability, and fostering a supportive environment, empowering them to be agents of positive change within their departments and communities.
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	<b>Networking Lunch</b> <i>STATE AGENCY UPDATES – 3 to 5 min</i>
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	<b>GAFC Business Session</b>
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>GSFA Business Session</b>

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	<b>BREAK</b>
3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>New Leadership, New Challenges and ideas of how to make the transition – <i>Ali Mims</i></b> This lecture will be addressing some of the challenges that comes along with being a new leader in a different organization or your own. What are some steps that can be taken to address with the decline of morale. What should you not do when coming into new leadership, and ways to get the personnel to buy into the direction that new leadership may want to go.  <b>The Power of Partnerships – <i>Beverley Walker</i></b> At a time when federal resources are being diverted, and there is an increase in demands on local community resources, fire departments must learn to engage in partnerships with community stakeholders, both traditional and non-traditional, for successful preparation, mitigation and recovery from hostile incidents
4:15 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>Building and Leading Functional Teams - <i>Kingman Schuld</i></b> This program will focus on leadership principals and practices necessary to build and sustain a culture of high-performing teams through influence and control, and avoidance of the pitfalls of dysfunctional teams.  The audience will participate in a facilitated lecture including group discussions to encourage open and honest dialogue, sharing of ideas, and collaboration that will support teamwork, professional growth, and communication among the attendees.  <b>Better Presentations: Selling the 7 C's - <i>Jeff Moss</i></b> This class will provide enhanced instruction on how to deliver more effective and engaging presentations in both large and small group settings. Learn to get their attention, keep them awake, and leave them with memorable information.
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	<b>Exhibit Hall Opens / Opening Reception</b> Take this opportunity to interact with vendors and other organizations that work with Georgia's fire service. Get a first-hand look at new equipment and learn how these companies are providing innovative solutions that could help your community.
<b>THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2025</b>	
8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	<b>Accountability in action – owning the mission - <i>Eddie Robinson</i></b> This session challenges fire service professionals to lead with accountability at every level—personally, within teams, and across organizations. Participants will explore how strong leadership, clear expectations, and mutual respect creates trust throughout the organization. Attendees will leave with practical tools to strengthen their leadership presence, reinforce standards, and drive a culture of integrity and responsibility in every aspect of the job.
8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>NERIS: Changing Fire Service Decision-Making - <i>Tom Jenkins</i></b> The National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) is replacing NFIRS and changing the landscape of fire service incident data and the information used for decision making. In this course, listen to the latest insights to the program and the changes that are taking place across the country.  <b>Surviving the Fire Service Together - <i>Ricky and Cheri Collett</i></b> Balancing marriage and family life in the fire service is no easy task—but it is possible. In this session, we'll explore the real challenges fire families face, from long shifts, constant training, and traumatic calls to the everyday demands of parenting and maintaining connection at home. Drawing from over three decades of personal experience, we'll share honest stories, practical strategies, and resources for finding support when it's needed most. This class is about how we've made it—so far—and how you can, too.
9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	<b>Coffee Break</b>
9:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	<b>Exhibit Hall Open</b>

	Spend additional time this morning meeting the companies and organizations that support Georgia's fire service. Lunch will be provided in the exhibit hall.
<b>11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Lunch</b> <i>Served in the Exhibit Hall</i>
<b>12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Memorial Service</b>
<b>1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.</b>	<b>GAFC Business Session</b>
<b>2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Ice Cream Social</b>
<b>3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b>	<b>GSFA Business Session</b>
<b>4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>The Future of Health &amp; Wellness @ Clayton County Fire &amp; Emergency Services - <i>Tim Sweat</i></b> This presentation will offer insight into the Health & Wellness Initiatives implemented by Clayton County Fire & Emergency Services to support the mental, physical, and medical well-being of the department's 451 members.  <b>Cancer The Untold Hardships - <i>Otis Calvin Hitchcock</i></b> As fire fighters we train for fires, rescue calls, medical calls, hazmat calls, and all types of dealing with the public in all forms. We work day in day out to be ready for the tough calls that come. We train to do all this in our sleep because when the bell rings we must be able to jump in and go. We train to do all this to make ourselves better to protect the ones we are called to protect. Then we go in for our normal medical check to hear the words you have cancer. Now what, who do the ones that you call for help call for help. Who do we as fire fighters turn to when our world falls apart. Now what and how.
<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Firefighters Competition &amp; Meal</b> Get ready to have some fun as fire departments compete through a series of challenges to claim top title! Join us in Forsyth to enjoy some good-spirited fun!  <b>Monroe County Parks and Rec</b> <b>100 Dan Pitts Dr</b> <b>Forsyth, GA 31029</b>
<b>FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2025</b>	
<b>7:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.</b>	<b>Morning Devotion Service</b>
<b>8:15 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Class Title TBD – <i>Scott Lesnick</i></b> Description Coming Soon
<b>9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>You Can Read Smoke But Can You Read Your People - <i>Zach Mathews</i></b> You Can Read Smoke, but Can You Read Your People?" is a leadership course for fire executives that focuses on mastering body language as a tool for more effective communication and leadership. It teaches how to read nonverbal cues, build trust, and respond to high-pressure situations with confidence and empathy—both on the fireground and in administrative roles. Participants will gain practical strategies to improve team dynamics, detect danger, and avoid miscommunication.  <b>Reefer Container Awareness - BC Eddy LODD Story - <i>Rodney Wiggins</i></b> The Reefer Container Awareness – BC Eddy LODD class sheds light on the often-overlooked dangers associated with refrigerated containers carrying non-hazardous materials. Through the powerful and sobering story of BC Eddy's final alarm, this course aims to increase awareness among responders about the hidden risks these trailers pose. Participants will gain critical insight into early identification, unique safety challenges, and essential initial response strategies—key knowledge that can prevent further injuries or line-of-duty deaths caused by containers many would never suspect to be deadly.
<b>11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:15 p.m. – 12:15 p.m.</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>12:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.</b>	<b>DUAL TRACKS</b>  <b>Before the Burnout: Coaching for Resilience and Readiness - <i>Freddie D. Broome</i></b>

	<p>Most firefighters don't seek counseling or chaplain services when the weight of the job becomes overwhelming. Instead, they often carry the burden silently—until stress surfaces in unexpected and harmful ways. This class introduces professional coaching as a proactive, confidential, and judgment-free alternative to support mental wellness. Grounded in real fire service experience, coaching meets firefighters where they are—helping them decompress, build emotional resilience, and grow personally and professionally. Through practical tools and real-life scenarios, participants will explore how coaching can be a step toward sustainable well-being before burnout becomes a reality.</p> <p><b>New Hazmat Team Leaders - Basic Needs for Your Tool Box - <i>Robert Mercer</i></b>  This course will review multiple means of attaining training, resources, and funding for hazardous materials response teams and will be focused towards new leaders or smaller response teams with funding constraints.</p>
<b>1:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b>	<p><b>DUAL TRACKS</b></p> <p><b>Detailed Leadership, Aggressive Tactics - <i>Micah Rains</i></b>  Intentional leadership is the foundation for success within an organization, on the fire ground, or when building relationships. From the bay floor to the battalion car, leadership will rise or fall based on investment in the little details. This class takes an in-depth look at what it means to be detailed with your people, and your profession. It will look at how good leadership can translate into aggressive tactics on the fire ground. Qualities of a good leader, how to deal with your people, and supporting the mission of the fire service are topics that will be discussed. To win on the fire ground we must be able to lead in the firehouse.</p> <p><b>The Mistake We Make While Trying to Learn From Our Mistakes - <i>William Voorhies</i></b>  All incidents, regardless of their size or impact, challenge public safety professionals - from field level responders up to incident managers - to build on previous experience and learn how to improve future responses. So, why aren't we better at it? This class explores how most responders often begin that process with an incorrect - though very human - mindset that can limit learning. It teaches students to properly orient their analysis of the myriad decisions that make up any emergency response. It then provides the student with a five-point system for after action review designed to identify opportunities to improve decision-making relevant to performance and response in the future; a system which can be easily employed for small, short operational period events up to crisis-level large-scale events.</p>
<b>4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>GSFA/GAFC Joint Closing Session</b>
<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Dinner on Your Own</b>