

# EMS Leaders Convene in Washington as Burnout, Turnover, and Underfunding Collide

*National EMS leaders convene in Washington, DC to connect workforce leadership with federal advocacy as burnout, turnover and underfunding reach critical levels*

ALBANY, NY, UNITED STATES, February 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As EMS systems nationwide confront record burnout, workforce turnover, and chronic underfunding, national EMS leaders are gathering March 23-24 in Washington, DC to align leadership development with federal advocacy.



The National EMS Management Association ([NEMSMA](#)) will host its 2026 Leadership Conference, supported by the [EMS Leadership Academy](#), ahead of the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians's annual EMS on the Hill Day March 25-26.

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We're asking EMS leaders to solve burnout and staffing in a system that's structurally underfunded by design. Leadership and advocacy must move together—one without the other won't fix this.”

*Lisa Giruzzi, co-founder of the EMS Leadership Academy.*

“EMS leaders are being asked to hold together a system that was never designed to sustain its workforce,” said NEMSMA's Pat Songer, MBA, NRP, FACPE, EMS executive and national EMS leader. “Burnout and turnover aren't failures of commitment or culture, they're the predictable result of structural strain and chronic misalignment between expectations and resources. This conference is about giving leaders the skills, perspective, and peer connection they need to support their people and build more resilient EMS organizations.”

The timing is driven by sobering data. The [EMS1 What Paramedics Want in 2025 survey](#) found 76% of EMS professionals report burnout as a critical issue, while the 2025 American Ambulance Association (AAA) workforce study reported annual turnover rates between 20–30% among EMTs

and paramedics .



“When 76% of providers say burnout is their top concern, that’s not a leadership failure or a staffing failure—it’s a system failure,” said Robbie MacCue, a paramedic and founder of the EMS Leadership Academy. “We have to equip leaders to support their people while also fixing the policies that keep EMS underfunded. You can’t solve one without the other.”

The American Ambulance Association has warned that the shortage is contributing to longer 9-1-1 response times and delayed interfacility transfers, threatening patient access to emergency care.

At the same time, a CMS Medicare Ground Ambulance Cost Collection analysis presented to MedPAC confirmed that Medicare reimbursement remains below the cost of delivering ambulance services, reinforcing what EMS leaders have long argued. An EMS1 editorial recently summarized: “The data is in. The debate is over. The check is still short.”




Conference organizers say the convergence of leadership education and federal advocacy reflects a growing consensus: workforce sustainability, reimbursement reform, and leadership capacity are inseparable.

The conference will feature three keynote voices offering distinct, high-impact perspectives on leadership and system change. General Robert Neller,



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Three perspectives. One stage. Countless takeaways.




GENERAL  
ROBERT B. NELLER

ASBEL MONTES

RAPHAEL  
BARISHANSKY


### DISRUPTIVE LEADERSHIP IN EMS/HEALTHCARE

**For More Information:**  
 [www.nemsma.org](http://www.nemsma.org)

**REGISTER NOW**

From left to right—General Robert Neller, USMC (Ret.), Asbel Montes, and Dr. Raphael Barishansky—three national leaders bringing perspectives on leadership under pressure, healthcare economics, and the future of EMS systems.

#### Respondents rank the critical issues facing EMS today: (1 being the most critical)

- 1. Burnout** 
- Retention of quality personnel
- Funding/reimbursement
- Career development/advancement
- Recruitment of qualified applicants
- Leadership
- Provider mental health
- Education of the workforce
- Provider safety
- Wait time/hospital delays

EMS1's 2025 Workforce Survey Results - Top 10 Responses shared with permission of EMS1/Lexipol.

former Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, will bring lessons on leading under pressure, accountability, and sustaining mission-driven organizations. Asbel Montes, a national thought leader in healthcare finance and reimbursement, will address the economic realities shaping the future of EMS and healthcare delivery. Closing the conference, Raphael Barishansky, DrPH, will connect leadership, public health, and workforce sustainability—challenging leaders to think bigger about their role in shaping resilient EMS systems.

#### About the EMS Leadership Academy:

The EMS Leadership Academy is a national organization focused on developing strong, self-aware leaders in emergency medical services. Through practical, EMS-specific training grounded in emotional intelligence and communication science, the Academy helps organizations improve retention, strengthen leadership at all levels, and build systems that support long-term success. The Academy is also the host of the annual EMS Leadership Summit, a global virtual event that has featured more than 200 international thought leaders and reached over 20,000 prehospital leaders across 44+ countries.

#### About the National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA):

The National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA) is a professional association of EMS leaders dedicated to advancing excellence in leadership and management across all EMS system models. NEMSMA is an inclusive organization that brings together leaders from public, private, fire-based, hospital, military, rural, urban, and third-service agencies to share best practices, peer insight, and real-world management experience. Through education, professional development, and advocacy, NEMSMA supports EMS executives and managers in strengthening workforce sustainability, operational performance, and care delivery nationwide.

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