



## Emergency Declarations and Legal Questions

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### ORIGINAL PROGRAM DATE

April 8, 2026

### REPORTING YOUR CREDIT

This on-demand program was a live seminar presented on April 8, 2026. If you attended or viewed the original presentation, please note that WSBA members may not claim credit for the same CLE sessions if repeated within their three-year reporting period.

### DESCRIPTION

Disasters seem to be increasing. Emergency responses and recovery efforts require coordination amongst multiple levels of government. Emergency proclamations can insert unique legal considerations into the mix. During this seminar, representatives from state and local government will share insight into these dynamic situations with a discussion of statutory authority, case law, and a review of some recent incidents.

### AGENDA

#### 1 Government Authority in Times of Emergency

This presentation will outline statutory authority for governmental emergency response efforts at the state level and local level and look at the handful of Washington cases that have delved into those questions.  
*Joe Panesko - Washington State Office of the Attorney General, Olympia, WA*

#### 2 The Law of Public Health Emergencies

The session will cover the current framework of authority for public health emergency response, recent statutory and caselaw updates, as well as recent examples of the application of these authorities.  
*Christopher Wright - Washington State Office of the Attorney General, Olympia, WA*

#### 3 Natural Resources Emergency Response to Wildfire

An overview of state wildfire response and the law. Discussion will include agency suppression efforts and the ongoing legal issues involved in state emergency wildfire preparedness.  
*Jason Foust - Washington State Office of the Attorney General, Olympia, WA*

#### 4 Emergency Declaration and Incident Responders

During an emergency, local government officials and incident responders work within the confines of two authorities, local government authority recognized under WA statute and the emergency declaration, with prescription for actions and resource allocation specific to the incident. Typically, the emergency declaration follows action already executed by first responders. In this presentation, Fire Chief Johnson will examine the implications of this offset in time frames.  
*Chief Leonard Johnson - McLane Black Lake Fire Department, Olympia, WA*