
PRIMA PRESS

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR MEMBERS

texasprima.org
Texas Chapter Public Risk Management Association

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Texas PRIMA family, let's get ready to fest!

The countdown is on, and I can't wait to welcome all of you November 1st - 4th at the Hyatt Regency Dallas for the 37th Annual Texas PRIMA Conference! This year, we're bringing a little Bavarian flair to Texas PRIMA Fest, and I think we have put together a conference that will have you saying "Prost!" to professional development, great connections, and a whole lot of fun.

The wait is over, registration is open! If you haven't registered yet, now is the time to grab your spot and take advantage of the early bird rate, available through October 6th. With over 45 educational sessions to choose from, there will be plenty of opportunities to gather new ideas, sharpen your skills, and bring valuable knowledge back to your organization. Be sure to check out available educational sessions on this year's [Schedule-at-a-Glance](#).

We'll kick things off Monday morning with our opening keynote speaker, Johnny Quinn, who will bring his unique perspective and energy to the stage as we start our conference together. From there, you'll have nearly three days of outstanding educational opportunities featuring experts from across the public risk management community.

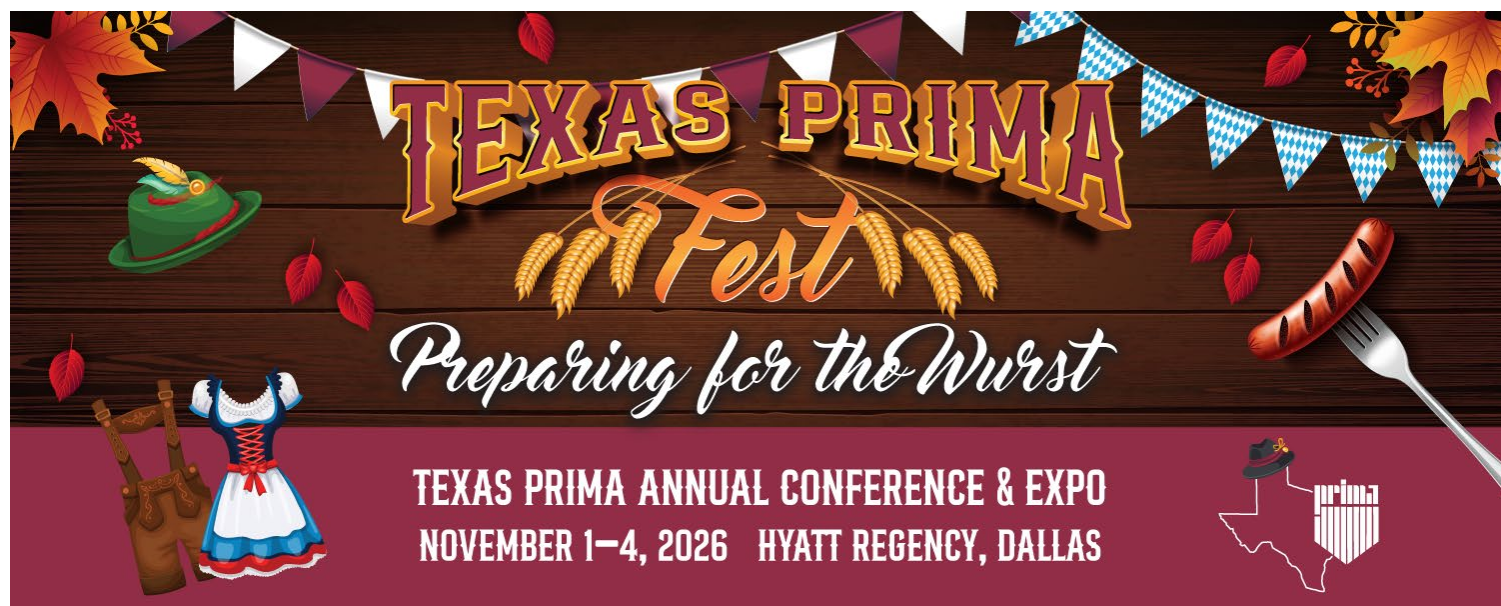
And because every good fest deserves a grand finale, we're changing things up this year! On Wednesday, we'll wrap up our conference with an inspiring closing keynote and brunch featuring Mark Schulman and Heather J. Crider. That's right - great conversation, great food, and great inspiration all in one place!

Of course, the best part of Texas PRIMA Fest is not just what happens in the sessions. It's the opportunity to reconnect with old friends, make new ones, share ideas, swap stories, and celebrate the incredible work we do every day to protect the organizations and communities we serve.

So, dust off your lederhosen, bring your Texas-sized enthusiasm, and get ready to fest, connect, and learn. [Register now](#) to join us at Texas PRIMA Fest.

I look forward to seeing each of you in Dallas. "Prost!" to another great Texas PRIMA conference!

Mandy Riske, ARM
2026 Texas PRIMA President



The Heat Isn't Over Yet!

September may signal the start of fall, but Texas temperatures can still create serious heat-related



risks for employees and students. OSHA's renewed National Emphasis Program for heat hazards places additional focus on protecting workers by ensuring access to water, rest, shade, or cool areas, acclimatization, training, and monitoring for signs of heat illness.

School districts also have new heat-safety requirements for the 2026–2027 school year. Beginning August 1, 2026, UIL requires member schools to use Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) readings to guide outdoor athletic and marching band practices. Depending on conditions, districts may need to increase rest and hydration breaks, reduce practice time, modify equipment, or suspend outdoor activities. Schools must also ensure water is readily available and that appropriate rapid-cooling capabilities are in place when required.

Whether you're protecting public works crews, parks employees, first responders, coaches, band staff, or students, don't let your guard down just because summer is ending. Review your organization's heat procedures, make sure supervisors understand the requirements, and ensure employees and students know the warning signs of heat illness.

Click [here](#) to review OSHA's heat safety resources. Click [here](#) for UIL's 2026–2027 Heat Stress & Athletic Participation requirements.



AI is Here - Is Your Organization Ready?

Artificial intelligence is changing the way government works, and Texas has new rules for how public entities use it. Laws passed by the 89th Texas Legislature established new requirements

and resources for AI governance, employee training, transparency, and responsible use. Certain state and local government employees must complete annual AI awareness training, while governmental entities also face new disclosure requirements for their use of AI.

The Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) has developed tools, including an AI Code of Ethics, model Acceptable Use Policy, training resources, and evaluation programs, to help public organizations navigate AI securely and responsibly.

Is your organization ready? Click [here](#) to learn what the new Texas AI framework could mean for your public entity.



Board Nominations

Have you ever considered serving on the Board of Directors with Texas PRIMA? As your President-Elect and Chair of the Nominations Committee, I encourage you to consider applying for one of the open director-at-large positions. Serving as a board member will include valuable leadership opportunities, personal and professional development, a sense of achievement, deeper insight into a great association, and the chance to enhance your leadership skills while expanding your professional network. View the application for eligibility criteria and the commitment requirements. **The application deadline is September 9th. [Apply now!](#)**

Berry Bairrington
2026 Texas PRIMA President-Elect



Conference Scholarship Opportunities

Want to attend the 2026 Texas PRIMA Annual Conference but don't have room in your organization's budget? Texas PRIMA may be able to help through its conference scholarship program.

These scholarships are designed to give public risk management professionals across Texas the chance to participate in the annual conference when funding from their entity is limited or unavailable. Public entity members who have not attended either of the past two Texas PRIMA conferences are eligible to apply.

Scholarship opportunities are also available to full-time students enrolled at a Texas college or university pursuing studies in public administration, risk management, human resources, or a related field.

Full and partial awards may help cover conference registration, 2027 Texas PRIMA membership, and lodging at the conference hotel or a nearby hotel.

Applications are due September 15, 2026. Scholarships are limited, so be sure to apply soon for the opportunity to join us at the 2026 Texas PRIMA Annual Conference!

[Scholarship Application](#)

[Student Scholarship Application](#)



Annual Awards Program

Every year, Texas PRIMA honors public-sector risk professionals for their excellence and contributions to their entities and the profession. So often in the public sector, great work goes unnoticed. As co-laborers in the field, we take this opportunity to encourage, support, and celebrate individuals and programs that contribute greatly to their organizations and the field of public sector risk management.

Your participation is needed in nominating deserving

individuals, be it yourself or someone else! Also, if you have implemented a program that has proven successful, we want to hear about it!

For the Risk Professional of the Year Award, [nominate](#) a Texas PRIMA member who exemplifies excellence, innovation, and commitment to the Risk and Insurance Management field.

For the Rising Star Award, [nominate](#) a Texas PRIMA member who is relatively new to the field of risk management (2-7 years) and has exemplified leadership potential, achievement in the field, and professional development.

For the Risk Program Achievement Award, [nominate](#) a project, program, or product that has contributed greatly to risk management success, and your entity can promote value to other public entities.

You have done great things, and you know others who have done great things. It is time to showcase your progress or that of someone you know!

Nominations are due September 15th.



PRIMA 2026: Texas PRIMA Represents in Fort Lauderdale

The national Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) recently hosted its annual conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Texas PRIMA was proud to have a strong presence once again! Texas members brought their expertise and experience to the national stage, serving as presenters for several educational sessions and sharing valuable insights with risk management professionals from across the country.

Texas PRIMA was also well represented through its leadership, demonstrating the important role our chapter continues to play within the national risk management community. The involvement of Texas members at the national level is a testament to the knowledge, dedication, and leadership that exists within our chapter.

Adding to this year's celebration, Texas PRIMA Board member Yoli Perez was honored as a recipient of PRIMA's Chapter Service Award. This recognition celebrates individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service and commitment to their state PRIMA chapter. We couldn't be more proud to see Yoli's dedication to Texas PRIMA recognized on the national stage!

From presenting educational sessions to serving in leadership roles and receiving well-deserved recognition, Texas PRIMA members continue to make their mark at the national level. We are Texas proud of the expertise, leadership, and commitment our members bring to the public risk management profession, and we're excited to see Texas PRIMA continue to shine!



Education & Networking Update

Webinar

September 10, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

[Advanced Property Claims: Trends and Updates](#)

*Presented by: Eric Botello, Associate Attorney,
Pearson Legal PC*

This session dives into emerging trends in insurance policy structures, evolving claims-handling issues, and common coverage pitfalls. Participants will learn how modern policy design, litigation trends, and contractual clauses increasingly shape coverage outcomes and disputes.

Webinar

October 14, 2026

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Smarter Fleets, Safer Streets: Leveraging Telematics, Cameras and AI for Safety, Accountability and Cost Control

Presented by: Kay Al Manna, Chief Financial Officer, Hartford Parking Authority

Participants will learn how real-time data improves driver accountability, supports proactive maintenance, and strengthens liability protections. Case study discussion will focus on use of video and GPS evidence to resolve insurance disputes and reduce claims. This session will also explore strategies for gaining union support, leveraging city purchasing power to reduce implementation costs, and embedding telematics into budgeting, fleet planning, and risk management processes to enhance safety and operational efficiency while keeping streets safe.

“Know Before You Go” Conference Coffee Talk

October 27, 2026

9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Learn all about our Annual Texas PRIMA Conference! Join us in this fun and engaging coffee talk that will discuss the ins and outs of our annual conference. This is a great opportunity for first-time conference attendees to ask questions and seasoned attendees to join in and share their experiences.

Texas PRIMA Annual Conference **Hyatt Regency in Dallas, TX**

November 1-4, 2026

Join us for Texas PRIMA Fest 2026 in Dallas, Texas! Registration is now open for our upcoming Texas PRIMA Annual conference.

Webinar

December 2, 2026

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

[How To Lead and Work with Challenging People](#)

Presented by: LeAnne Lagasse

Participants will learn how to equip themselves to lead and build healthier, higher-performing organizations where people thrive and teams deliver stronger results. They will understand how to strengthen communication, build trust, improve engagement and retention, and develop more effective people leaders. Blending research, real-world experience, and practical tools, LeAnne challenges leaders to look honestly at how they lead, how others experience them, and how their daily choices shape the workplace around them.

[Virtual Holiday Hangout](#)

December 15, 2026

9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Grab a cup of your favorite brew and join the Texas PRIMA Board for a Holiday Hangout! Our topic “What’s on your Risk Management Wish List” will be an interactive discussion where participants can share their biggest challenges and concerns and goals for the coming year! Don’t miss it, we will have trivia and prize giveaways!

[In Person Regional Roundtable](#)

December 17, 2026

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. in RGV-McAllen, TX

Topic: Mitigating General Liability Claims, Subrogation & Recoveries

Join us for a roundtable discussion on the importance of leveraging resources to recover claims efficiently and effectively. Learn the best strategies to mitigate general liability claims and discuss effective claims data tracking systems for claim recoveries. A networking reception will follow.

Don't forget, recordings of our webinars are in your [Community](#) under the Resources header.

Welcome New Members

Sandra Adame, City of Austin
Daisy De Leon, City of McAllen
Hunter Hightower, City of Irving
Brittany Hopwood, Harris County - OMB
Jakyla Hudson, City of Lewisville
Dinah Jacobs, City of Columbus
Shirley Johnson, City of Richardson
Angelia Lemmonds, UT San Antonio Department of
Public Safety
Katie Miller, City of Midland
Jasi Prachyl, City of Waco
Paul Reynolds, CSHO, City of Austin
Sheri Rich, Keller ISD
Joshua Sermons, Sr., City of Austin
Heidy Taylor, City of Fulshear
Matthew Wright, City of Buda



June Member Spotlight **Joseph Tracy, Brazos County**

Joseph Tracy joined the field of risk management in December 2024 after an 18-year career in criminal justice. While relatively new to the profession, he has quickly embraced the challenges and opportunities of managing risk in a dynamic environment.

"What I enjoy most about risk management is that no two days are the same," Joseph says. "Every day brings new incidents, research challenges, and opportunities to solve problems. The variety keeps the work engaging and continually pushes me to grow professionally."

A pivotal moment in Joseph's risk management journey was attending his first Texas PRIMA conference. The experience exposed him to new ideas, best practices, and a network of professionals who helped broaden his understanding of the field. Inspired by what he learned, Joseph has helped implement programs and processes within his organization that strengthen risk awareness, improve efficiency, and enhance service delivery.

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Lamar University and several professional certifications, including OSHA 30, NSC Defensive Driving Instructor, HSI Level 2 Instructor, ACTCP Certification, and others. He is currently pursuing the Associate in Risk Management (ARM™) designation through The Institutes. His department has also earned notable recognition, receiving the Texas Association of Counties' Excellence in Safety Award in 2024 and Safety Achievement Award in 2025.

Outside of work, Joseph enjoys motorcycle riding, automotive restoration and customization projects, exploring international cuisines, cooking with his children, and gaming on his PS5.



July Member Spotlight

Karina G. Perez, McAllen Independent School District

Karina Perez entered the field of risk management through Human Resources and has built a career focused on employee benefits, workers' compensation, compliance, safety, and employee relations. She values the opportunity to make a positive impact by helping create safer workplaces and supporting employees through challenging situations.

Karina credits Texas PRIMA with providing valuable opportunities for professional growth, networking, and collaboration with risk professionals across Texas. She holds a Bachelor of Business in Management and a Master of Public Administration and continues to pursue professional development in risk management and organizational leadership.

Among her accomplishments, Karina is proud of McAllen ISD's success in securing more than \$26,000 in Texas Political Subdivision Safety Grant funding over the past three years to support district safety initiatives.

Her favorite quote, "Success is where preparation and opportunity meet," reflects her belief that preparation and proactive planning are at the heart

of effective risk management.

When she's not working, Karina enjoys spending time with family, traveling, gardening, and creating lasting memories with her daughter.



August Member Spotlight

Melissa Ledesma, City of Sugar Land

Melissa Ledesma began her career in risk management in 2015 with the City of Sugar Land and has developed extensive experience in workers' compensation, liability, claims management, and safety program development. Throughout her career, she has enjoyed collaborating with departments to identify practical solutions that reduce risk while positively affecting the employees and communities they serve.

For Melissa, one of the most rewarding aspects of risk management is that every day presents a new challenge. She values the opportunity to prevent injuries, solve problems, and develop programs that help employees remain safe and successful in their work.

Texas PRIMA has played an important role in Melissa's professional development by providing opportunities to learn from industry professionals, stay informed about emerging trends, and build relationships with peers throughout the state. The education, networking, and shared experiences she has gained through Texas PRIMA have strengthened her knowledge and provided ideas she has brought back to her organization.

Melissa holds a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in Occupational Safety and Health. She is also pursuing the Associate in Risk Management (ARM™) designation to continue expanding her knowledge and expertise. In 2021, Melissa received the Texas PRIMA Rising Star Award. She considers it an honor to have been

recognized by Texas PRIMA and to have had the opportunity to represent her organization and the risk management profession.

Her favorite quote reflects the practical and forward-thinking approach she brings to her role: "Control what you can, prepare for what you can't."

Outside of work, Melissa enjoys discovering new hiking destinations and exploring state parks with her husband and two daughters. One of her favorite ways to relax is spending a day at the river—whether she is in the water or simply enjoying the scenery.



Letter From the Editor

September is here, and with it comes our final issue of Texas PRIMA Press before our annual conference begins on November 1.

Conference is one of the best opportunities we have to reconnect, share ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen the relationships that make Texas PRIMA such a valuable professional community. If you have not finalized your plans to attend, now is the time!

As you read this issue, think about the questions, challenges, and ideas you want to bring with you in November. Often, the most valuable takeaways come from conversations with peers who understand the work we do.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support *Texas PRIMA Press* and our association. We look forward to seeing you at the conference!

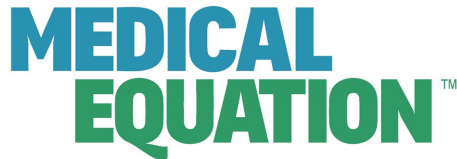
[Belinda Raindl](#)

Texas PRIMA Press Editor
Texas PRIMA Secretary



Sponsor Highlight

Government entities face risks that are significantly different than those faced by commercial businesses and corporations. Public entities need an insurance partner who is truly on the cutting edge of designing specialized insurance programs, but one who also understands the process of operating in the public sector.



In its 29th year in business, Medical Equation provides independent utilization management solutions for the insurance industry and bill review / expert witness testimony for law firms. The company was founded and is still owned by three physicians who lead a panel of over 30 reviewer physicians and specialists.



What makes Lockton stand apart is also what makes us better: independence. Lockton's private ownership empowers its 12,500+ Associates doing business in more than 150 countries to focus solely on clients' risk and insurance needs. With expertise that reaches around the globe, Lockton delivers the deep understanding needed to accomplish remarkable results.

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