PERRIN CONFERENCES

# NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION DEFECT CONFERENCE

## November 12-13, 2026
## The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale

## CONFERENCE CHAIRS

**Gary F. Baumann, Esq.**
Baumann, Gant, Keeley & Biondi, P.A.

**Kelly Behrens, CRIS**
Upland Specialty Insurance

**Michael Bryant**
The RiverStone Group

**Steve Lokus**
Sompo

Agenda Sponsor:

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# Perrin Conferences
# National Construction Defect Conference
# Thursday, November 12 - Friday, November 13, 2026
# The Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale Hotel

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## Wednesday, November 11, 2026

**6:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Opening Networking Cocktail Reception** (Ritz-Carlton Pool Deck)
***Sponsored by: B2R Consulting Group and Gunther Legal***

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## Thursday, November 12, 2026

**8:00 AM – 8:45 AM: Registration and Light Breakfast** (Grand Ballroom Foyer)

**8:45 AM – 9:00 AM: Welcome & Opening Remarks** (Grand Ballroom)

**Gary F. Baumann, Esq.,** Baumann, Gant, Keeley & Biondi, P.A., Fort Lauderdale, FL
**Kelly Behrens, CRIS,** Vice President of Claims, Upland Specialty Insurance, Omaha, NE
**Michael Bryant,** Vice President, Head of P&C, The RiverStone Group, Manchester, NH
**Steve Lokus,** Vice President, Casualty Construction Claims, Sompo, Irvine, CA

### 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM: Jurisdictional Analysis and Future Outlook of Nationwide Industry Trends

- Overview of the most active and emerging jurisdictions
- Filing and building trends in 2026 and what to expect in 2027
- Facing the Future – Construction Risks in 2026 and Beyond
- Venturing into new jurisdictions and knowing the specific state standards
- Housing legislation

**Moderator: Michael Bryant,** Vice President, Head of P&C, The RiverStone Group, Manchester, NH
**Benjamin W. Dowers, Esq.,** Gunther Legal, PLLC, Fort Lauderdale, FL
**Stephen J. Henning, Esq.,** Wood Smith Henning & Berman LLP, Santa Monica, CA
**Phyllis A. Modlin,** Director & Senior Counsel, Casualty Claims, Markel, Carlsbad, CA

### 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Collateral Damage to Vulnerable Owners

- Recent headline structural events are influencing the evaluation of routine construction defect claims
- Catastrophic-failure themes are shaping repair scopes, claim values, and litigation strategy in non-catastrophic matters

- Perspectives on causation, severity, and appropriate scope of repair
- Practical approaches to early investigation, expert involvement, and documentation
- Strategies for evaluating life-safety allegations and distinguishing genuine risk from claim inflation

**Federico Balestrazzi,** Managing Principal, Argos Advisory & Forensics, Miami, FL
**Gary F. Baumann, Esq.,** Baumann, Gant, Keeley & Biondi, P.A., Fort Lauderdale, FL
**Kenneth A. Bloom, Esq.,** Gartner + Bloom, PC, New York, NY
**Mark Boyle, Esq.,** Boyle, Leonard & Anderson, Fort Myers, FL
**Steve Lokus,** Vice President, Casualty Construction Claims, Sompo, Irvine, CA

### 11:00 AM – 11:15 AM: Break

### 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM: Navigating the New Frontier in Data Center Construction

- The explosive growth in data center construction and the convergence of construction/claim risks
- Owner-furnished equipment and coverage issues
- Environmental and sustainability challenges
- The growing political and community scrutiny around power, water demands, pollution, etc.

**Rachel Pearson, Esq.,** Saxe Doernberger & Vita, P.C., Trumbull, CT
**Cynthia Pertile Tarle, Esq.,** Kahana Feld, Carlsbad, CA
**Ryan Pitterson,** Managing Director, Turner Surety and Insurance Brokerage, Inc., Dallas, TX
**Thomas Rocha, P.E., C.F.E.I.**, Electrical Engineer / Fire Cause & Origin Expert, MC Consultants, Inc., Houston, TX

### 12:15 PM – 1:45 PM: Lunch (on your own)

### 1:45 PM – 2:30 PM: Talent Shortage on the Claims and Legal Sides

- Consistent movement of adjusters and attorneys
- Where do we go from here?

**Moderator: Rich Smith,** Chief Claims Officer, Upland Specialty Insurance, Atlanta, GA
**Paul C. Balentine III, CPCU,** Associate Vice President, Nationwide, Scottsdale, AZ
**Won Jai Lee, JD, CPCU, CCP,** AVP, Coaction Insurance, Jersey City, NJ
**Kelly Martin Malone, Esq.,** MG+M The Law Firm, Boston, MA
**Richard L. Righi, Esq.,** Righi Fitch Law Group, Phoenix, AZ

### 2:30 PM – 3:15 PM: The Builders' Perspectives

**Tony Bell,** General Counsel, Williams Homes, Santa Clarita, CA
**Molly Smith,** Associate General Counsel, Lennar, Irving, TX

*Additional Speakers to be Added.*

**3:15 PM – 3:30 PM: Break**

**3:30 PM – 4:30 PM: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Developments in Construction Defect Litigation**

- New issues and current application of AI-assisted document review, data analysis, and report preparation
- Relying on the outputs of AI and what that means when you go to court
- Waiver of attorney-client issues
- Risk management and quality control with the AI processes

**Anthony D. Capasso, Esq.,** Murphy Schiller & Wilkes LLP, Newark, NJ
**George Green Jr., Esq.,** Freeman Mathis & Gary, Atlanta, GA
**Greg Kelly,** Chief Structural Engineer, Structural Forensic Experts, LLC, Pensacola, FL

**4:30 PM – 5:15 PM: The Plaintiff Attorneys' Perspectives**

- Views from multiple jurisdictions
- Impact of media and billboards

**Jeffrey P. Kerrane, Esq.,** Kerrane Storz, P.C., Broomfield, CO
**Luke P. Ryan, Esq.,** Shinnick & Ryan LLP, San Diego, CA

*Additional Speaker to be Added.*

**5:15 PM – 6:15 PM: Networking Cocktail Reception** (Grand Ballroom Foyer)
***Sponsored by: Boyle, Leonard & Anderson, P.A.***

**8:30 PM – 11:00 PM: Conference Party** (Offsite Location - Lulu's Bait Shack, 17 South Atlantic Blvd.)

*All registered attendees are welcome to join us for live music by Coco Slipstk. Open Bar 8:30 PM - 10:30 PM.*

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## Friday, November 13, 2026

**8:15 AM – 9:00 AM: Coffee and Light Breakfast** (Grand Ballroom Foyer)

**9:00 AM – 9:45 AM: Fraud by Design – Weaponizing Construction Defect Cases**

- Construction defects versus material misrepresentations
- Legal principles governing fraud and misrepresentation

**Kimberly A. Canals, Esq.,** Cole Scott & Kissane, Tampa, FL
**Ellen G. Smith, Esq.,** Boyle, Leonard & Anderson, Fort Myers, FL
**Vadim Veksler,** Complex Claims Manager – Construction Defect Corporate Claims, Selective Insurance Company of America, Trabuco Canyon, CA

### 9:45 AM – 10:45 AM: Insurance Coverage, Risk Transfer, Indemnity & Allocation

- Shrinking Statute of Limitations (SOLs in FL, TX, AZ)
- Statute of Repose
- Coverage issues to consider
- Strategies for handling the coverage and defense including risk transfer tips
- Allocating liability among contractors, subcontractors and design professionals

**Roma Leaming,** Executive Casualty/GLPD Adjuster, Engle Martin, Phoenix, AZ
**Jordan Lewis, Esq.,** Kennedys, Fort Lauderdale, FL
**Paul Mason,** Claims Manager, Energy and Construction, AXA XL, Los Angeles, CA

### 10:45 AM – 11:20 AM: Going Beyond the Defect: Managing Emotional Architecture of Construction Litigation

- Practical strategies for recognizing and managing behavioral drivers that influence decision making throughout a dispute
- The psychology of mediation, stakeholder pressure, emotional contagion within project teams, and techniques for improving negotiation outcomes through more effective communication and expectation management

**Chad N. Dunigan, Esq.,** Wood Smith Henning & Berman LLP, Orlando, FL
**Barbara Laskaris-Lorigan,** Senior Vice President, Head of Claims, Golden State Claims Adjusters, Carlsbad, CA
**Walter Nelson,** Claims Manager, Turner Surety and Insurance Brokerage, Inc., Vancouver, WA

### 11:20 AM – 12:00 PM: Structural Failure Claims: Causation Challenges and Expert Battles

- Key engineering standards and codes used to establish (or rebut) breach of standard of care
- Strategies for deposing and cross-examining structural engineering experts
- Admissibility challenges to plaintiff expert methodologies
- Using retained experts to develop alternative causation theories (soil conditions, seismic activity, deferred maintenance)
- Coordinating expert reports with comparative fault allocation strategies

**Justin Kovacsik, CGC,** Principal Consultant, Rimkus, Orlando, FL
**Michael F. Suarez, Esq.,** Kubicki Draper, Miami, FL

### 12:00 PM: Conference Concludes

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# National Construction Defect Conference
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# The Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale Hotel

**Speakers and Agenda are subject to change.*

## CONFERENCE LOCATION

**The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale, FL**
**1 N Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd.**
**Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304**

## REGISTRATION

**Registration Rate:** $1225
**Paralegal Rate:** $395

All in-house counsel and insurance claims professionals receive complimentary registration at Perrin Conferences live programs.

Contact Bethany Corio 610-220-1817 or Lynnsey Perrin 610-804-6165 with questions or to register at the complimentary rate.

**Register Online:** National Construction Defect Conference | Perrin Conferences

**Mail to:** Perrin Conferences**,** 214 Orchard Way**,** Wayne, PA 19087

**Register by Phone:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lynnsey Perrin | 610-804-6165 | lperrin@perrinconferences.com |
| Bethany Corio | 610-220-1817 | bcorio@perrinconferences.com |

Each registration includes private website access to course materials and admission to all sessions and networking events such as refreshment breaks and cocktail receptions.

*Group discounts available, please inquire.*

## HOTEL ROOM BLOCK

There is a group rate at The Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale (1 North Fort Lauderdale Beach Boulevard) for conference attendees and speakers. The rate is $369 per night.

Reserve your room

Please contact Bethany Corio with any questions.

## CLE & CE CREDIT INFORMATION

Applications are being made to all CLE states as requested by attendees.
CE Adjuster credit is pending approval in Florida, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Texas.

Please note, there will be no partial credit awarded for CE credit – The full conference must be attended to earn credit. Please send requests for state specific accreditation to CLE@perrinconferences.com.

## CANCELLATION POLICY

If you cannot attend the conference, please notify us prior to **October 29, 2026** and we will refund your fee, less a $25 administrative fee, or provide a credit for a future conference. The credit needs to be used within one year from the conference date.

Cancellations received on or after **October 30, 2026** will not be refunded. You may enroll a substitute at any time before the conference starts. Cancellations received on or after **October 30, 2026** may receive a credit for $200 less than the registration amount paid and can be used by their firm/company within one year from the conference date.

## FINANCIAL AID POLICY

Perrin Conferences is dedicated to providing high-quality continuing legal education to attorneys interested in course offerings. Program registrants who are unable to afford registration fees due to financial hardship may apply for a complete registration waiver or reduction in fee. Factors to be considered include employment status and annual income.  Please send a written letter to Lynnsey Perrin addressing your financial situation for consideration. All requests must be submitted 14 days prior to the start of the program and are kept confidential.

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**Perrin Conferences**
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November 12-13, 2026 – Fort Lauderdale, FL
Mail-in Registration Form

Attendee Name _____

Company/Firm Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

_____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address _____

**CIRCLE ONE:** Attorney Non-Attorney Insurance Professional In-House Counsel

***Registration Fee*: $1225**
***Paralegal Fee*: $395**

**All Insurance Professionals & In-House Counsel receive Complimentary attendance*

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***Email Form to:*** *bcorio@perrinconferences.com or lperrin@perrinconferences.com*
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