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

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

5:30 PM – 6:45 PM: Opening Networking Cocktail Reception (Sea Lavie Pool Deck – 7th Floor)
Sponsored by: B2R Consulting Group and Gunther Legal, PLLC

Thursday, November 12, 2026

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM: Registration and Full Breakfast (Grand Ballroom Foyer – 4th Floor)
Sponsored by: Murphy Schiller & Wilkes LLP

8:45 AM – 9:00 AM: Welcome & Opening Remarks (Grand Ballroom – 4th Floor)

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
Thomas D. Fama, Esq., Wood Smith Henning & Berman LLP, Concord, CA
Ken Kasdan, Esq., Kasdan Turner Thomson Booth LLP, Tempe, AZ
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

Moderator: Mark Boyle, Esq., Boyle Anderson, P.A., Fort Myers, FL
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
Steve Lokus, Vice President, Casualty Construction Claims, Sompo, Irvine, CA

11:00 AM – 11:15 AM: Break
Sponsored by: Resnick & Louis, P.C.

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., SDV Fenchurch, Trumbull, CT
Cynthia Pertile Tarle, Esq., Kahana Feld, Carlsbad, CA
Ryan Pitterson, Vice President of Claims, Turner Surety & 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

- Working with outside counsel, preserving client rights, and early dispute resolution
- Construction defect claims, warranty issues, and AI-generated demand letters
- WRAPS, insurance coverage, policy exclusions, and litigation management

Moderator: Avery Sheppard, Esq., Ware, Jackson, Lee, O'Neill, Smith & Barrow, LLP, Houston, TX
Tony Bell, General Counsel, Williams Homes, Santa Clarita, CA
Tammy Brito, Vice President, Legal, Liberty, Miami, FL
Ian K. Hall, Assistant General Counsel**,** Dream Finders Homes, Atlanta, GA
Molly Smith, Associate General Counsel, Lennar, Irving, TX

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM: Break (Grand Ballroom Foyer – 4th Floor)
Sponsored by: Argos Advisory & Forensics

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
- The Algorithm on the Stand: Expert Witness Use of AI in Formulating Opinions and Reports, and the Cross Cross

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
Christopher D. Ling AIA, NCARB, LEEDap, Forensic Architect, The Vertex Companies, New York, NY

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

- Views from multiple jurisdictions
- Impact of media and billboards

Moderator: Kelly Behrens, CRIS, Vice President of Claims, Upland Specialty Insurance, Omaha, NE
Scott Booth, Esq., Kasdan Turner Thomson Booth LLP, Tempe, AZ
Christopher Gladd, Esq., Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, New York, NY
Jeffrey P. Kerrane, Esq., Kerrane Storz, P.C., Broomfield, CO
Luke P. Ryan, Esq., Shinnick & Ryan LLP, San Diego, CA

5:15 PM – 6:15 PM: Networking Cocktail Reception (Grand Ballroom Foyer – 4th Floor)
Sponsored by: Boyle Anderson, P.A. and Proceed Legal

8:30 PM – 10:30 PM: Conference Closing Party (Offsite Location near the Ritz - 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.
Sponsored by: Lexitas, Rimkus, and S-E-A, Ltd.

Friday, November 13, 2026

8:15 AM – 9:00 AM: Coffee and Full Breakfast (Grand Ballroom Foyer – 4th Floor)
Sponsored by: Aperture

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM: Fraud by Design: Ethical Challenges in Construction Defect Litigation

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

Moderator: Kimberly A. Canals, Esq., Cole, Scott & Kissane, Tampa, FL
Frank Figueredo, Claims Manager, US Claims Group, Miami, FL
Ellen G. Smith, Esq., Boyle Anderson, P.A., Tampa, FL
M. Todd Woolery, Senior Vice President, NV5, Charlotte, NC

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM: Insurance Coverage, Risk Transfer, Indemnity & Allocation

- Coverage issues to consider
- Strategies for handling the coverage and defense including risk transfer tips
- Allocating liability among contractors, subcontractors and design professionals

Moderator: Gregory J. Kahn, Esq., Rembold Hirschman, West Palm Beach, FL
Roma Leaming, Executive Casualty/GLPD Adjuster, Engle Martin, Phoenix, AZ
Jordan Lewis, Esq., Kennedys Law LLP, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Tracy Yaun JD,CPCU,SCLA,CLMP, Head of Casualty Claims, AXA XL, Los Angeles, CA

10:45 AM – 11:30 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

Moderator: Katherine L. Klaspa, Esq., Wood Smith Henning & Berman LLP, Orlando, FL
Kelly Behrens, CRIS, Vice President of Claims, Upland Specialty Insurance, Omaha, NE
Ian K. Hall, Assistant General Counsel**,** Dream Finders Homes, Atlanta, GA
Barbara Laskaris-Lorigan, Senior Vice President, Head of Claims, Golden State Claims Adjusters, Carlsbad, CA

11:30 AM – 12:15 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

Rinaldo Cartaya III, Esq., Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer, P.A., Orlando, FL
Justin Kovacsik, CGC, Principal Consultant, Rimkus, Orlando, FL
Meliz Martin, Esq., Lydecker LLP, Miami, FL
Michael F. Suarez, Esq., Kubicki Draper, Miami, FL

12:15 PM: Conference Concludes

Gary F. Baumann is a founding partner of Baumann, Gant, Keeley & Biondi, P.A., with extensive experience in construction defect litigation, catastrophic loss, professional liability, and other complex civil matters. He has tried nearly 75 civil jury trials throughout Florida, including securing defense verdicts in construction defect, products liability, and wrongful death cases. Gary previously served on Florida and federal defense steering committees handling Chinese drywall claims, including an appointment by the Honorable Eldon Fallon in the federal multidistrict litigation. A co-chair of Perrin Conferences' National Construction Defect Conference since 2014, he regularly moderates and speaks at national programs addressing construction defect law, catastrophic trial strategies, and claims adjuster ethics. His published work examines Chinese drywall litigation and the impact of the Surfside Towers collapse. He earned his law degree with honors from Nova Southeastern University in 1996.

Kelly Behrens, CRIS

Vice President of Claims
Upland Specialty Insurance

Kelly Behrens is Vice President of Claims at Upland Specialty Insurance, with more than 20 years of experience in commercial casualty claims and complex litigation management. Her experience encompasses construction defect claims, large-exposure casualty matters, coverage analysis, negotiation, and claims resolution in the excess and surplus lines market. Before joining Upland, Kelly served as Claims Manager–Construction Defect at Argo Group and held claims management and senior specialist positions at Vela Insurance Services, a Berkley company. She previously spent nearly 12 years at National Indemnity Company, overseeing commercial general liability claims from investigation through resolution. A returning co-chair of Perrin Conferences' National Construction Defect Conference, Kelly has contributed to discussions on insurance coverage, Florida's contribution statute, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence in construction defect claims. She holds the Construction Risk and Insurance Specialist (CRIS) designation and was a 2019 RISE Award recipient, recognizing emerging talent in the insurance industry.

Michael Bryant

Vice President, Head of P&C,
The RiverStone Group

Michael Bryant is Vice President and Head of P&C at The RiverStone Group, where he leads teams responsible for construction defect, general liability, professional liability, and other property and casualty claims. He brings more than 25 years of insurance experience, with a background spanning surplus lines, runoff operations, complex litigation management, and acquisitions. Since joining RiverStone in 2003 as a Construction Defect Case Manager, Michael has held progressively senior roles, including providing technical oversight of construction defect and general liability claims across the organization. His experience includes managing high-exposure claims, mitigating portfolio liabilities, and integrating acquired businesses, claims portfolios, and staff into ongoing operations. A returning co-chair, panelist, and moderator at Perrin Conferences' National Construction Defect Conference, Michael brings a carrier and runoff perspective to discussions of construction liability and claims strategy. Outside his professional work, he serves on the board of Lantern Light Camps, supporting outdoor and educational opportunities for youth.

Steve Lokus

Vice President, Casualty Construction Claims, Sompo

Steve Lokus is Vice President, Casualty Construction Claims at Sompo, with more than 25 years of experience in coverage, liability, risk transfer, and litigation management. His background includes handling and managing large commercial general liability claims across primary and excess layers, including claims involving substantial self-insured retentions and wrap-up policies. Before joining Sompo in 2024, Steve spent 12 years at Navigators, where his leadership roles included Vice President, Construction Practice Group, and Western Regional Vice President, Casualty Claims. He previously held construction defect claims management positions at Fireman's Fund and West Coast Casualty. A returning co-chair and board member of Perrin Conferences' National Construction Defect Conference, Steve also contributed to industry education through CLM Construction Claims College, ClaimsXchange's Construction Claims Academy and IRMI's Construction Risk Management Boot Camp. His experience brings a practical claims perspective to discussions of construction exposures, coverage issues, and strategies for managing complex litigation.

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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 BLOCKS

The Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale, 1 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd. (*sold out)*
Reserve your room

W Fort Lauderdale, 401 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd, $405+ per night
Reserve your room

The Westin Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, 321 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd, $249+ 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 approved in New Hampshire and Texas and pending approval in Florida and North Carolina.

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.

THE PERRIN CONFERENCE CLOSING PARTY – THURSDAY 11/12

Sponsored by Lexitas, Rimkus, and S-E-A, Ltd.

Thursday, November 12th, 8:30pm at the Lulu's Bait Shack, 17 S Atlantic Blvd Ste 212, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Enjoy live entertainment by Coco Slipstk, open bar from 8:30pm-10:30pm, and lively conversation.

*This is a private Perrin event for registered attendees and speakers. Those who are not registered for the conference will not be permitted to attend.

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
National Construction Defect Conference
November 12-13, 2026 – Fort Lauderdale, FL
Mail-in Registration Form

Attendee Name _____

Company/Firm Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

_____

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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*

Name on Card _____

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Please Mail Form to: *Perrin Conferences, 214 Orchard Way, Wayne, PA 19087*
Email Form to: *bcorio@perrinconferences.com or lperrin@perrinconferences.com*
Make Checks Payable to: *Perrin Conferences, LLC*