

2026

Market Update



RT ENVIRONMENTAL
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PROFESSIONAL





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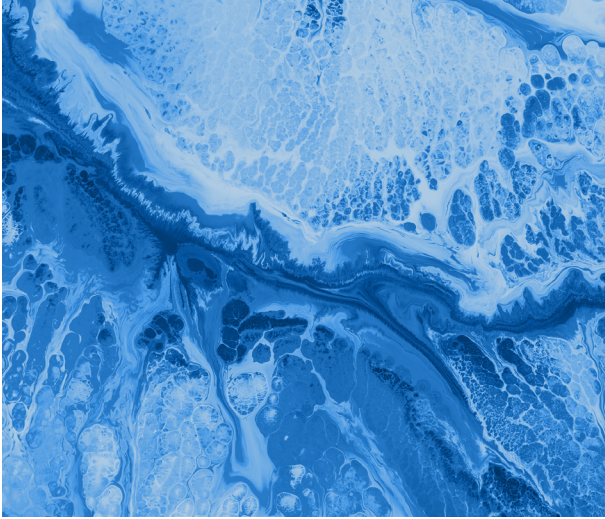
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RT ECP's Market Update provides what we believe is an insightful look into the "state-of the-marketplace" and the conditions we feel are likely to impact this highly specialized field.

Intro

The 2026 Market Update reflects RT ECP's comprehensive analysis of environmental and construction-related professional liability insurance trends shaping this specialized sector. Drawing on insights from our team of experts and leading carriers nationwide, this report provides perspective on the challenges and opportunities expected to influence the marketplace in the year ahead.

In this edition, we review key developments from 2025, including the continued impact of social inflation, heightened scrutiny surrounding emerging contaminants such as Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), and evolving coverage restrictions across multiple product lines. We also explore anticipated trends for 2026, from projected growth in infrastructure, data centers, and energy projects to the increasing complexity of risk management strategies driven by regulatory changes and technological advancements including an increased use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Our goal is to equip brokers, underwriters, and insureds with actionable intelligence to navigate a dynamic market environment. Whether addressing contractual requirements, managing environmental exposures, or responding to shifting economic conditions, this update serves as a resource for informed decision-making in an era of rapid change.



Contractor's Pollution Liability (CPL) provides coverage for pollution conditions that occur as a result of covered contracting operations performed by or on behalf of the insured.

The standard CPL form typically contains the following coverages:

- Jobsite (contracting operations)
- Transportation
- Non-owned disposal site (NODS)
- Pollution Legal Liability (PLL) for owned / leased / rented locations
- Emergency Response to minimize sudden & accidental pollution conditions

Unlike all other lines, which have seen rates fluctuate and change on a dime, rates charged by the leading CPL markets continue to remain "soft to stable." This is primarily due to its low frequency loss history and new carriers willing to enter the market year-over-year. Although CPL remained highly profitable for the carriers in 2025, we saw the proliferation of carriers electing to decrease the overall limits outlaid to a single insured. This shift has been spurred by friendly fire as the CPL is readily combined with Contractor's Professional Liability (CPrL) within a singular form that shares the limit of

liability amongst the two coverages. There's been notable increase in claim activity, including an uptick in Rectification / Mitigation claims, thereby driving carriers to restrict the total limit of liability for both the CPL and CPrL. Excess layers remained readily available within the marketplace for those insureds with favorable loss history.

Market Drivers

- **Contractual Requirements:** winning that big project (and the client not waiving the pollution coverage) will continue to be the primary driver for insureds purchasing CPL coverage for the first time.
- **Risk Transfer:** in the ever-changing world of federal regulations, insureds will realize the breadth of coverage provided within the CPL policy to help safeguard their balance sheets against the uncertainty of local, state, and federal environmental regulations.
- **PFAS Exposure:** with approximately 15,000 different types of "Forever Chemicals" in existence, insureds will reconsider the CPL policy to help transfer their jobsite products and disposal liabilities.

2026 Outlook

2026 is predicted to be a solid year for new construction starts within the United States. The Federal Reserve believes, per their latest expectations, that they will continue to lower interest rates. The volatile environment regarding tariffs could abate but there remains continued uncertainty. Regardless of outcome, construction starts within the infrastructure, energy, artificial intelligence, institutional, and healthcare sectors are expected to see strong growth when compared to 2025. While this is the case for most building sectors, we expect starts within the residential and commercial sectors to fall flat.

Compromised indoor air quality, typically in the form of mold, fungus, lead, and asbestos, is expected to continue to be the leading source of CPL claims in 2026. Projects including exposures to wood-frame, single family homes, and PFAS will continue to experience heightened levels of underwriting scrutiny for the upcoming year.

PFAS claims will undoubtedly increase, potentially in a dramatic fashion. Expect CPL markets to respond accordingly via outright PFAS exclusions or restricting the limit of liability available to PFAS exposures.

General Liability, Pollution Legal Liability



During 2025, the combined Pollution Legal Liability (PLL) (claims-made) and General Liability (GL) (occurrence) policy forms continued to be the go-to solution for facility-based risks with environmental exposures for insureds' products, sites and processes. The form blends ISO-similar GL language along with PLL and may include other environmental coverages such as contractor's pollution, products pollution, transportation pollution, and non-owned disposal / location coverage all in a single non-auditable form (from most markets). 2025 continued to see carriers restricting coverages and increase rates for certain classes of business, while one market withdrew from a specific class of business (i.e., recyclers). Additional markets chose to restrict PLL coverage by removing gradual pollution coverage (i.e., replacing with sudden & accidental coverage only) and discontinuing existing retroactive dates.

PFAS exclusions became the norm on most GL /PLL policy forms during 2025. The ability to carve-back PFAS coverage for bodily injury, property damage and products pollution required significant additional information, as coverage grants were not guaranteed. A lack of environmental due diligence meant securing PLL coverage without a retroactive date, or even gradual new conditions coverage, continued to be a challenge in 2025. Several carriers introduced and required the completion of PFAS Supplemental Applications before they would consider offering some form of coverage.

GL / PLL rates remained stable during 2025; however, automobile and excess rates continued to increase with several carriers requiring a minimum of 15% rate on auto and 10% on excess with clean loss ratios. Excess capacity restrictions continued over the past year as well, with many carriers cutting their follow form or unsupported excess limits by 50% and charging close to, if not the same, premiums as the expiring full limit. Reduced excess capacity led to an increase in overall excess capacity with a number of markets introducing the ability to provide unsupported excess for certain classes. Carriers continued a harder line with withholding binders and policies until all binding subjectivities were received.

During 2025, concerns continued over rising litigation of claims, costly effects of natural disasters (i.e., hurricanes, wildfires, convective storms), start-up companies, and social inflation, which has not abated in its impact on the economy. Auto coverage and its impact overall via nuclear verdicts remained problematic and continued driver shortage remains an issue for insureds as well as the insurance industry overall.

Market Drivers

- GL / PLL forms continue to compete against standard GL offerings in the fixed facility space while including affirmative pollution cover such as products pollution liability at the same or slightly higher premiums.
- Continued increase in automobile rates especially in certain jurisdictions will continue as stressors in this space while monoline auto capacity is very limited for these classes of business
- The introduction of new markets in this space may assist with keeping the established markets "rates" honest; however, it remains to be seen how their approach to automobile coverage will impact the marketplace.

2026 Outlook

In 2026, RT ECP anticipates the impacts of emerging contaminants, class restrictions, as well as restricted PLL coverage and lower excess capacity to continue. For higher hazard classes; (i.e., recyclers and heavy manufacturing) we expect continued upward rate pressure (10% to 20%) on auto and excess. For profitable accounts, we expect rates to range from flat to 5% to 10% increases depending on if excess is provided or not. We also anticipate higher rate increases for accounts with elevated loss ratios. PLL coverage restrictions will continue with certain markets as they continue to re-underwrite their books and shed what they perceive to be high risk exposure accounts.

We also anticipate several new markets in the GL / PLL space in 2026, which may serve to buoy some of the challenges described above in this market sector.

General Liability, Contractor's Pollution Liability, Professional Liability



During 2025, the combined Environmental Casualty Program (General Liability (GL), Contractors Pollution Liability (CPL), and Professional Liability (PL), continued to be the preferred insurance program for specific market segments, including but not limited to: asbestos and lead abatement, crime scene cleanup, industrial cleaning and hygiene, emergency response, environmental consultants (Phase I & II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)), industrial cleaning and hygiene, mold remediation, oil and gas, vapor control and degassing, waste transporters, and renewable energy contractors such as solar, and / or some combination thereof. These policies continue to be written on an annual term and offered, depending on the carrier, on a flat and non-auditable basis. Very limited distribution remained for environmental casualty markets who can offer complementary coverages such as Workers' Compensation and / or Automobile Liability.

The standalone auto market continued to harden in 2025; however, the environmental casualty marketplace, contingent on binding the GL, can help on auto with flexibility on the non-admitted lines where there may not be availability on the admitted side. When a market controls all lines under one roof, RT ECP has found that the advantage goes to the insured from a creativity standpoint. Double digit rate increases have become commonplace for environmental contractors with heavier fleets, especially on excess liability policies. This trend continued in 2025 due to increasing nuclear verdicts and the limited driver pool. Excess limit capacity continues to shrink but even though more carriers are needed to build excess towers, the capacity overall still exists to build \$100 million or more in limits. Established carriers typically deploy only \$10 million in excess over auto with a plethora of unsupported excess markets willing to assist over the top. Meanwhile, several excess and surplus lines carriers are limiting excess capacity over auto with several restricting excess capacity to \$3 million.

Market Drivers

- Truncation of limits by incumbent carriers on excess liability policies will continue to drive opportunity in the unsupported excess arena. There is still plenty of excess capacity throughout the marketplace even though it may take more carriers to build excess towers than it used to.
- Standalone auto market rates continue to increase where environmental carriers willing to consider auto on a primary basis continue to separate themselves on new business, while increasing retention making accounts much stickier controlling auto.

2026 Outlook

RT ECP expects PFAS remediation contractors to be more of a focal point in 2026 as environmental casualty markets gear up to write the firms focused on addressing contamination by "forever chemicals." Environmental contractors that add a PFAS remediation division or start-ups focusing on such operations will likely fit the environmental casualty market on the combined environmental package form inclusive of GL / CPL / PL. We expect increased underwriting scrutiny (i.e., PFAS questionnaires, pre-quote / bind engineering surveys, etc.) for these types of risks.

We also anticipate additional markets offering companion automobile and worker's compensation solutions, and carriers being open to PFAS remediation risks. We believe carriers will continue to protect their loss ratios by restricting higher limits and tolerance for the frequency of claims or large severity losses albeit capacity is still readily available.

Pollution Legal Liability (PLL) continues to be the preferred coverage in the environmental insurance marketplace to facilitate or provide solutions for: contaminated land transactions, lender requirements, and site redevelopment. PLL typically serves as a mechanism to mitigate operational exposures for a multitude of risk classes.

Throughout 2025, the PLL market has experienced softening conditions driven by increased capacity from new entrants. This additional competition has prompted incumbent carriers to adopt more aggressive renewal strategies, often resulting in rate reductions for accounts with strong performance and favorable loss histories. Monoline PLL limits and retentions have remained stable, with select carriers continuing to offer limits up to \$50 million. However, excess capacity has contracted among several markets, leading to greater participation from multiple carriers to fulfill excess layer requirements.

Coverage terms in 2025 continued to be influenced by high-profile mold exposures, increased legionella claims, natural disasters, contaminated site development, and emerging contaminants.

While PFAS remain the most prominent concern, scrutiny has expanded to include ethylene oxide (EO), microplastics, and formaldehyde. The market has acknowledged these risks but, aside from PFAS, has not broadly implemented formal coverage restrictions. PFAS exclusions remain common, with some carriers mandating them for specific classes; however, there has been progress toward offering affirmative coverage. Such coverage is typically sub-limited and often restricted to bodily injury and property damage. In certain cases, and with comprehensive underwriting information, carriers may also extend clean-up coverage.

The current market conditions, combined with the new entrants into the space seeking to build their book of business, have resulted in solutions for risks that have been historically difficult to place, if not fully unavailable. This resulted in terms being provided for a PFAS manufacturing risk that included affirmative PFAS coverage on a primary basis. Additionally, excess coverage for the same risk was able to be offered.

One area facing heightened regulatory review is the use of PLL policies to satisfy financial responsibility requirements for risks involving regulated storage tanks. Evolving federal and state regulations have led to previously accepted policy forms and endorsements being rejected, most often at the state level. In response, carriers have adjusted their approach, frequently manuscripting policy forms to address coverage requirements identified by regulatory authorities.

Many markets continue to restrict policy term lengths for mold coverage, particularly for higher-risk classes such as habitational and hospitality. While extended terms remain available for certain classes, they often involve split structures, with coverage for new conditions limited to three years for these higher-risk segments. Ten-year terms for transactional business remain accessible and unchanged.

Market Drivers

- Contractual Requirements (i.e., Purchase and Sale or Asset Purchase Agreements; Landlord / Lease Requirements; and Lender Requirements).
- PLL is expected to be the preferred risk management tool to satisfy Federal and State Financial Responsibility requirements for storing and treating hazardous materials (including chemicals and petroleum products).
- Proactive Risk Management solution to protect corporations' balance sheets while satisfying their fiduciary obligations relative to their environmental exposures.

Pollution Legal Liability

Coverage enhancements such as contingent business interruption, defense outside the limits, and first-party diminution of value continue to be readily available for operational real estate portfolios. Markets continue to soften their stance on disinfection coverage, with some carriers providing full limits on certain classes. The coverage has been offered more readily on certain healthcare classes, although true hospital systems remain a high-hazard class. The moratorium on this coverage remains for most healthcare classes, especially those that are true hospital systems. Additionally, markets have continued to provide clean-up coverage for known pollution conditions for lenders requiring PLL coverage.



2026 Outlook

RT ECP expects the PLL marketplace to gain momentum over the next year. With the Federal Reserve lowering interest rates in 2025 with three separate reductions, and the cost of borrowing decreasing, we expect this to drive an increase in utilization of PLL as a risk management tool to facilitate real estate / property transactions.

We anticipate continued selective underwriting providing affirmative coverage for PFAS. We also expect several new carriers to deploy their capacity in the new year further putting pressure on rates in the PLL space.

Architects and Engineers Professional Liability



Several trends characterize the state of the Architects and Engineers Professional Liability (AEPL) marketplace.

AEPL is a stand-alone insurance product geared towards professional enterprises in the design and construction industry including architects, engineers, surveyors, Agency Construction Managers, design professionals, and consultants.

During 2025, one of the significant trends was an overall increase in both claims frequency and severity noted by several carriers who responded to the Ames & Gough PLI Market 2025 Survey. These challenges stem from a variety of factors including social inflation, rising construction costs, supply chain constraints for specialized equipment, as well as generalized inflation. Multiple carriers also cited claims complexity as a factor in this trend.

While the availability of limits remained consistent with prior years, carriers applied elevated degrees of underwriting scrutiny when deploying limits in excess of \$5 million per claim / aggregate. Wherever design professionals are unable to negotiate limit requirements to a more modest level, they often benefited from exploring alternative AEPL structures with other carriers

including project specific excess, annually renewable excess and / or true project specific professional liability placements. This approach meets contractual requirements without disrupting the relationship with the Insured's primary AEPL carrier.

Market Drivers

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): As architects and other design professionals turn to generative AI, it is important for Risk Managers and other leaders to generate and enforce policies surrounding the use of such tools. While we have seen relatively few carriers take a definitive stance on this issue, AEPL carriers have expressed concern with claims driven by faulty algorithms, repetitive design errors and others. AI presents an opportunity for design firms to bring efficiencies of scale to their practice, but architects and engineering firms should examine these tools with risk management principles in mind.
- Several carriers in the AEPL marketplace have implemented changes in distribution strategy, including a division of underwriting units between dedicated retail and dedicated wholesale teams.

2026 Outlook

While rates overall remained stable in 2025, design professionals engaged in structural engineering, civil engineering, geotechnical engineering and architecture should expect modest headwinds when preparing for their 2026 renewals. Due to potential claim trends in higher-risk venues such as Florida, California, Colorado, Texas, Pennsylvania and New York, insureds should consider a proactive approach to their 2026 renewals in anticipation of elevated rates, or in some cases non-renewal notice issued by the insurance carrier if the risk no longer fits their underwriting appetite. Furthermore, all design firms, regardless of specialization, should work with their insurance and risk management resources to develop alternate strategies for securing additional limit options when carriers adopt a more disciplined approach to limit deployment.

As conditions continue to evolve, a growing number of AEPL firms are finding a home in the E&S marketplace. As of year end 2024, 9.5% of all premiums written in the U.S. were facilitated by E&S carriers, up 0.4% from 2023. When creative risk transfer solutions are needed, the E&S marketplace continues to be a source of innovation and growth.

Contractor's Professional Liability

Contractor's Professional Liability (CPrL) addresses damages or loss resulting from acts, errors or omissions in professional services performed by or on behalf of a construction firm. The typical CPrL form includes a Professional Liability insuring agreement along with two first-party insuring agreements: protective indemnity and rectification / mitigation.

In 2025, the CPrL insurance marketplace remained steady. Approximately the same number of carriers write this product with rates remaining stable, or even aggressive, on traditional project types (i.e., offices, warehouses, apartments). However, the rapid increase in projects involving newer technologies and intricate, in-house design is leading to higher deductibles / retentions and larger premium programs specific to these projects. Rectification / mitigation claims continue to dominate the complex nature of claims in the CPrL space, with a market-wide emphasis on insureds needing to obtain carrier approval before implementing or addressing project revisions.

The future is here! Data center construction hit a record \$14 billion in July 2025 with annual projections of over \$52 billion in data center spending.¹ Directly related is the anticipated growth in energy infrastructure projects with the high level of energy needed to support data center functionality. This is all related to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Power demand estimates from U.S. data centers are projected to grow fivefold over the next 10 years.² This is in contrast to an anticipated drag on the clean energy sector due to Federal funding cuts and the expiration of renewable tax credits (solar projects were dominating the news in prior years).

Labor shortages continued to dominate the construction industry in 2025. Material shortages and tariffs have changed the outlook on development. However, rising costs are here to stay and projects will continue to break ground if owners wish to begin their desired profitable journeys. Labor and material costs may never return to where they were 12 to 18 months ago, but as tariffs fluctuate and political landscapes evolve, the economy will inevitably adapt. It is expected that the recent influx of “megaprojects,” with overall costs in the billions, will continue and involve more construction-related intricacy.

Market Drivers

- **Data Centers:** Complex projects for newer technologies, with construction costs in the billions and high insurance costs, require market response as to limits and rating models
- **Carrier Project Capacity:** Market response to larger projects with large limits creates challenges for limit outlay requiring thoughtful navigation of insurance programs; carriers often unable to go beyond \$10 million in limits



Contractor's Professional Liability

2026 Outlook

Predictions for 2026 construction starts are projected to be nearly flat (0.4% decline) as compared to 2025. Healthcare facility projects are projected to have the largest percentage increase with the largest decreases being faced by manufacturing and power plant / gas / communications projects. This follows 6% growth in overall construction starts from 2024 to 2025.³

With newer technologies, there is no choice but for insurance markets to educate themselves and become creative in how they plan to insure such novel project types. With flexibility comes heightened scrutiny of contract language and a microscope on project design teams. Higher limits being required by economic powerhouses for all project participants will continue to drive more insureds into the CPrL marketplace. From an insurance perspective, these projects require additional coverage analysis and building of towers to reach both required and desired limits, with market familiarity being integral to finding potential solutions.

Along those lines and given the constant rise in economic uncertainty and volatility, industries must respond. This includes the construction industry and those who pay for the projects. To keep costs reasonable, a focus on various project delivery methods can be expected. While design build is a traditional, sequential approach, owners may seek to utilize consultants more often and earlier in the process, seeking to find ways to expedite the design process and limit the construction phase. The further emergence of progressive design build (a project delivery method in which owners engage consultants and the design team to develop the project with a second phase of finalizing design and constructing the project to follow; the goal being more certainty as to timing and cost) is one example of an industry change that could become more prominent as owners seek more project efficiency.

¹ <https://news.constructconnect.com/december-data-center-report-starts-spending-gains-but-costs-do-too#:~:text=Near%2DTerm%20Data%20Center%20Groundbreakings,square%20feet%20a%20year%20ago>

² <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/power-and-utilities/power-and-utilities-industry-outlook.html>

³ <https://www.enr.com/articles/62031-2026-forecast-megaprojects-data-centers-spur-growth-amid-shifting-policies>

Owner's Protective Professional Indemnity

Owner's Protective Professional Indemnity

(OPPI) is designed to protect project owners from professional liability risks related to design and construction services. Unlike professional liability policies for architects, engineers or contractors, OPPI focuses on the owner and acts as an umbrella over the design professionals' and contractors' primary professional liability policies when those limits are exhausted or when coverage deficiencies exist.

OPPI is a cost-effective way for owners to protect themselves against professional liability exposures that could jeopardize project budgets, timelines, and financial stability. The policy is placed at project inception and provides coverage from initial design through the applicable Statute of Repose.

Exposure from design errors or negligent professional acts can have a substantial impact regardless of scale. OPPI can be a great fit for projects valued under \$50 million if underlying limits are not aligned with project complexity.

2025 has seen OPPI transition to a core requirement for sophisticated project owners. As project values in the data center and infrastructure sectors have skyrocketed, the traditional reliance on design and construction professional's primary insurance has proven insufficient to many project owners.

The surge in AI and cloud computing has driven the development of massive data centers. These projects are uniquely suited for OPPI due to: rising construction costs, system, complexity, speed to market, vicarious liability, inadequate limits, and contractual risk transfer

2026 Outlook

The industry anticipates continued escalation in project scale. For large projects like stadiums, data centers, renewable energy infrastructure and large mixed-use, we expect the following trends:

Limited Underlying Protection: While project values rise, architects and engineers are finding the cost or availability of higher professional liability limits prohibitive.

Market Drivers

- **Rising Construction Costs:** High-value projects amplify financial risk. \$1 to \$4 billion projects have become commonplace. The underlying professional liability limits may not support the defense costs associated with litigation let alone be adequate to indemnify the owner.
- **System Complexity:** Data centers require extensive MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) design to manage power and cooling loads. A minor design error can lead to significant financial damages.
- **Speed to Market:** OPPI provides the owner with a dedicated buffer when fast-tracked designs lead to coordination gaps between multiple consultants.
- **Vicarious Liability:** Because data center owners often face direct lawsuits from various third parties from neighbors to investors and end-users, the Third-Party Defense coverage in an OPPI policy can be beneficial to provide owner's a primary defense.
- **Inadequate Limits:** Many architects and engineers carry relatively low professional liability limits and are not increasing limits on scale as project complexity and value rise. For projects in excess of \$1 billion, these limits may be insufficient. OPPI tends to be more economical than excess limits from the architect or engineer or contractor's professional market.
- **Contractual Risk Transfer Limitations:** As the overall scale of projects rises, and insurance rates for design professionals remain high, understandably architects and engineers are pushing harder than ever to limit their liability.

We anticipate OPPI to continue to be the preferred mechanism to supplement existing coverage.

Focus on Risk Transfer: Design firms are aggressively negotiating limits of liability. Owners will increasingly use OPPI to provide a cost effective and efficient solution.

Real Estate Developers Professional Liability



Real Estate Developers Professional Liability (RED) is a specialized insurance solution designed to address the unique professional exposures faced by real estate developers.

Terms typically include coverage for liability arising from design and construction management performed by or on behalf of the developer, management of owned and non-owned properties, and real estate brokerage services. Any organization engaged in acquiring and improving real property is a candidate for this coverage.

During 2025, the RED market remained stable with at least ten active carriers following the addition of a new entrant and the departure of one market. The increased capacity and continued growth placed downward pressure on pricing, with minimum premiums dropping to as low as \$7,500. Overall, capacity from any individual carrier remains limited to \$5 million, with higher limits typically obtained through layered programs.

Commercial projects, including apartments, retail and office space, hospitality, and manufacturing continued to be the most attractive project types to underwriters during 2025. By contrast, condominium and single-family home developments faced heightened underwriting scrutiny, resulting in higher rates, increased retentions, and more restrictive terms.

In 2025, there was a notable increase in companies that specialize in managing hospitality and senior living portfolios purchasing RED coverage, largely driven by private equity investment in new facilities. A significant benefit of RED in these scenarios is its ability to respond to investor claims related to design, construction management, property management, and/or real estate services. Another key driver in policy acquisition is larger real estate clients interested in “upgrading” their miscellaneous professional liability (MPL) policies,

Market Drivers

- Third party investors requiring their development partners to carry professional liability insurance to address their self-performed or delegated professional liability exposure on projects.
- Proliferation of limitations of liability in design contracts and the relatively low professional liability limits carried by many design firms compared to overall project values remain key motivators, as developers seek protection against costly design defect claims. More than ever, RED policies are being purchased by developers as a potential supplement to existing professional liability programs.

which typically only contemplate coverage for property management, leasing, sales and third party tenant discrimination coverage, in favor of RED programs, which also address exposure to design and construction professional liability.

2026 Outlook

During 2026, we expect real estate owners / developers to continue to seek annually renewable RED policies to address their day to day self-performed professional liability exposures and to partner them with a project-specific Owners Protective Professional Indemnity (OPPI) policy for severity driven design and construction professional exposures for higher risk / higher construction value projects. Industry trends point to one or two additional entrants in 2026, signaling modest growth and continued competition as well as continued competitive premium.

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