

Justin Ford

Short-Term Rental Safety Expert | Expert Witness

Surry, Maine, United States

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Recognized global authority in short-term rental (STR) safety, with nearly three decades of experience spanning the vacation rental industry, fire service, and safety operations. Widely regarded as having inspected more short-term rentals than any individual globally, with unmatched field experience in identifying hazards, establishing safety standards, and evaluating negligence and “reasonable care” in STR environments.

Creator of the world’s largest STR-specific safety certification program and a leading voice in advancing safety standards across the global STR industry. Frequently consulted by operators, insurers, attorneys, and regulators on safety practices, incident analysis, and liability exposure.

Represents the short-term rental industry in national code development as a member of the NFPA 101/5000 Short-Term Rental Task Group, contributing to the integration of STR-specific provisions into life safety codes, and as a member of the Fire Code Action Committee (FCAC) Short-Term Rental Sub-workgroup 5.10, supporting the development of building code guidance aligned with the International Residential Code and International Building Code.

Recognized as one of the most frequently interviewed voices globally on STR safety, with over 200 podcast and webinar appearances and ranking among the top 50 most podcast-interviewed individuals in this field.

Qualified to provide expert testimony in cases involving fire safety, carbon monoxide exposure, egress violations, deck failures, pool and spa incidents, and general premises liability in short-term rentals.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Short-Term Rental Safety Standards & Best Practices
- Premises Liability & Negligence (STR Context)
- Fire Prevention, Detection & Response

- Carbon Monoxide & Gas Safety
 - Emergency Egress & Building Safety
 - Decks, Railings & Structural Risk Awareness
 - Pools, Hot Tubs & Drowning Prevention
 - Safety Inspections, Documentation & Compliance
 - Risk Mitigation & Operational Safety Systems
 - Safety Signage & Guest Communication
 - Incident Investigation & Root Cause Analysis
 - Industry Standards vs. Local Code Requirements
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director of Safety & Certification Programs

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2019 – *Present*

- Developed and lead the **Short-Term Rental Safety Inspector (STRSI) Certification Program**, the largest global safety certification program specific to STRs
 - Established standardized safety inspection protocols used by property managers and operators worldwide
 - Consult with property managers, insurance providers, and legal professionals on risk mitigation and safety compliance
 - Lead safety training initiatives for thousands of operators globally
 - Oversee development of safety checklists, inspection frameworks, and documentation systems used in litigation defense
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Owner / Operator – Vacation Rental Management Company ‘*On the Water in Maine*’

1997 – 2019

- Owned and operated an award-winning vacation rental management company for approximately 22 years
 - Managed large portfolios of STR properties with direct responsibility for guest safety, operations, and compliance
 - Developed early safety procedures and operational standards later formalized into industry frameworks
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Firefighter & Training Officer (15 Years)

Municipal Fire Service

- Responded to residential and commercial fire incidents, rescues, and emergency situations
 - Extensive experience in fire behavior, suppression, and life safety systems
 - Provided real-world insight into fire origin, spread, and preventability
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United States Coast Guard

Active Duty Service - 4 years

- Training and operational experience in safety, emergency response, and risk management
 - Foundation in disciplined safety systems and hazard awareness
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CERTIFICATIONS & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Creator, **Short-Term Rental Safety Inspector (STRSI) Certification Program**
 - Developer of comprehensive STR safety inspection checklist (77+ point framework)
 - Program adopted by leading property managers and informed regulatory discussions globally
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INDUSTRY IMPACT & RECOGNITION

- Credited with contributing to **100+ lives saved and thousands of injuries prevented** through safety advocacy and implementation
 - Two-year Recipient of the **Shortyz Pioneer Award (2025 & 2026)** – highest individual honor in the global STR industry
 - Educated **10,000+ operators in person** and reached **10+ million individuals** through digital content, podcasts, and training
 - Contributed to safety adoption across **hundreds of property management companies and thousands of properties worldwide**
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SPEAKING, MEDIA & PUBLICATIONS

- Featured on:
 - Good Morning America
 - Today Show
 - Published in:
 - National Fire Protection Association Journal (2023, “*Renter Beware*”)
 - Speaker at:
 - VRMA Conferences (since 2006)
 - Short Stay Summit (London)
 - VRNation Annual Conference
 - International STR industry events
 - Guest on **200+ podcasts and webinars** (4M+ listens)
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EXPERT WITNESS SERVICES

Available for plaintiff and defense cases involving:

- Short-term rental safety incidents
- Fire-related injuries or fatalities
- Carbon monoxide exposure cases
- Egress violations and wrongful death claims
- Deck collapse and structural-related injuries
- Pool, hot tub, and drowning incidents
- Safety standard of care and negligence evaluations

Services Include:

- Case review and expert opinion reports
 - Deposition and trial testimony
 - Incident reconstruction and safety analysis
 - Evaluation of compliance with industry standards
 - Review of inspection records, policies, and procedures
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KEY CASE & INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE AREAS

- Understanding of “reasonable care” in STR operations
- Familiarity with International Building Code (IBC) classifications (R-1, R-2, R-3)
- Knowledge of NFPA life safety principles as applied to STRs

- Experience evaluating gaps between local regulations and actual safety risks
 - Analysis of preventable incidents vs. “accidents” in STR environments
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PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Vacation Rental Management Association (VRMA)
 - National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) – Industry Engagement
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Based in Maine; available nationwide and internationally
 - Extensive experience reviewing safety documentation and inspection records
 - Strong ability to communicate complex safety issues clearly to juries and courts
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REFERENCES

Available upon request