

Rosebud Decks & Porches Issues Deck Inspection Guidance Amid Drought

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NORTH ST PAUL, MN - September 02, 2026 -

Rosebud Decks & Porches has issued inspection guidance for homeowners following the U.S. Drought Monitor's classification of more than three-quarters of Minnesota in at least moderate drought, with more than a third of the state in severe drought as of late July 2026.

The classification followed roughly ten consecutive days of high temperatures at or above 90 degrees in mid-July accompanied by little measurable rainfall. Year-to-date precipitation across the Twin Cities metropolitan area is running several inches behind normal for the period, and surface soil moisture across much of the region has fallen well below levels considered adequate.

The company said the conditions matter to any structure supported by footings set in the ground. Soil loses volume as moisture leaves it, and the rate of that change depends heavily on composition. Clay particles bind water tightly and can change volume considerably as that water evaporates, while sandier soils shed and regain moisture with less dimensional change.

Soil composition varies widely across the metropolitan area, sometimes between neighboring properties. The Natural Resources Conservation Service publishes soil data by address through its Web Soil Survey, a free public tool that allows a homeowner to identify what is beneath a specific parcel rather than relying on regional generalizations.

"Soil moves. It always has," said Joseph Becker, owner of Rosebud Decks & Porches. "What an unusually dry summer does is compress the timeline. Changes that might have appeared gradually across several seasons can show up in one, which is why a deck can feel different in August than it did in May."

According to Becker, footing depth governs how much a structure is affected by seasonal moisture change. Footings extending well below the surface reach soil layers that hold moisture longer and change volume

less. Shallower footings sit closer to the surface, where moisture levels fluctuate most and where seasonal movement is more pronounced.

Minnesota building practice places deck footings below the regional frost depth. That requirement exists primarily to address winter frost heave, but the same depth also situates a footing in soil that is less affected by summer drying, which is why properly set footings tend to weather dry seasons better than shallow ones.

The company said movement generally reveals itself in specific locations rather than across a structure at once. Homeowners can begin at the ledger, where a deck attaches to the house, looking for gaps or separated trim that were not present earlier in the season. That connection carries a substantial share of the load and is a common point of failure on older structures.

Stair stringers offer a second indicator. Where a stringer meets grade, a gap that has opened or a step that no longer sits flush can reflect movement in the ground beneath it. Gates and adjacent doors that have begun to bind or swing differently can point in the same direction.

A third indicator is less visual. A deck that feels different underfoot than it did earlier in the season, particularly where one area behaves differently from another, may be reflecting changes in how load is carried through the framing below.

"The distinction that matters is between surface wear and structural condition, because the two call for entirely different work," Becker said. "Replacing boards addresses appearance. Framing, footings and the connection at the house determine whether a structure has service life left in it, and repair scoped without assessing those can conceal a problem rather than resolve it."

The company noted that decking material does not change what happens below the surface. Composite and PVC surfaces require less upkeep than wood and resist moisture differently, but the framing, hardware and footings supporting any of those surfaces respond to soil conditions in the same way.

A structural assessment typically covers footing condition and alignment, post plumb, framing and beam connections, hardware and fasteners, and the ledger attachment and its flashing. Those findings determine whether a deck warrants targeted repair, a new surface over existing framing, or a full rebuild.

Late summer is a practical window for that evaluation. Decks remain in regular use, which makes irregularities easier to notice, and the season allows time for any resulting work to be scheduled before conditions change.

Current drought classifications are updated weekly by the U.S. Drought Monitor. The Minnesota Department

of Natural Resources State Climatology Office publishes ongoing precipitation and soil moisture reporting for the state, and the National Weather Service office serving the Twin Cities issues periodic drought briefings covering regional conditions.

Rosebud Decks & Porches is a custom deck and porch builder serving the Twin Cities metropolitan area and western Wisconsin. The company designs and builds residential and commercial decks in composite, PVC and wood, and provides deck framing, deck repair, porch construction, pergolas, railing and deck lighting. It has specialized in deck and porch construction since 2018.

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For more information about Rosebud Decks & Porches, contact the company here: Rosebud Decks & Porches - North St. Paul Joseph Becker jbecker@rosebudconstruction.com 2275 McKnight Rd N #8, North St Paul, MN 55109, United States

Rosebud Decks & Porches

Rosebud Decks & Porches is a certified deck building specialist based in North St. Paul, serving the Twin Cities metro and Western Wisconsin. We design and build custom decks, porches, pergolas, privacy walls, and railing systems

Website: <https://rosebudconstruction.com/>

Email: jbecker@rosebudconstruction.com

