



North Decks and Outdoor Living Reveals How Record Summer Heat Affects Decking Materials

September 02, 2026

CONCORD, NC - September 02, 2026 -

North Decks and Outdoor Living is drawing attention to how sustained extreme heat affects decking materials and outdoor structures, following one of the warmest Julys on record in North Carolina.

The National Centers for Environmental Information reports a preliminary statewide average temperature of 79.3 degrees for July, ranking it the 10th warmest July in North Carolina since 1895. Locally the ranking was higher still, with Charlotte tying for its 5th warmest July on record. The month opened under a heat dome pattern that pushed temperatures past 100 degrees across much of the Piedmont, including a reading of 103 degrees at the North Carolina State Climate Office monitoring station in Salisbury on July 3. Several communities across the region recorded their first triple digit readings in more than a decade during that stretch.

The heat arrived on top of an already unusual year. Much of the North Carolina Piedmont spent the first half of 2026 in significant rainfall deficit, and Cabarrus County recorded its third driest year to date in 132 years of

record keeping. Conditions shifted late in July, when soaking rainfall moved across the state and improved, though did not eliminate, drought conditions. For outdoor structures, that sequence matters as much as the temperature itself, because materials and the ground beneath them respond to both heat and moisture.

Wood, composite, and PVC decking each respond to heat according to composition, and all three expand and contract as surface temperatures cycle through the day. Decking systems are engineered with specific requirements for spacing, fastening, and support that accommodate this movement. When those requirements are followed, seasonal movement is normal and largely invisible. When they are not, a summer of sustained heat tends to make the shortfall apparent, which is one reason material selection and installation detail carry additional weight in a climate that produces both high heat and high humidity.

Surface temperature also determines whether a deck gets used at all. Board color and sun exposure influence how hot a walking surface becomes during the afternoon, and a deck in full southern exposure behaves differently from an identical deck in shade. Orientation, surrounding tree cover, and the presence or absence of an overhead structure all factor into how a space performs through the hottest weeks of the year. In many cases the material performs exactly as designed while the space still goes unused, simply because nothing was built to manage the sun.

"Heat does not usually break a deck, but it does reveal what was built into it," said Tyler North, Owner and Founder of North Decks and Outdoor Living. "Spacing, fastening, and the material itself are decisions made long before a heat wave arrives, and a summer like this one shows which of those decisions were made carefully."

Framing and ventilation play a role that is less visible than the deck surface. Air movement beneath a structure allows moisture to escape rather than accumulate, and hardware selected for outdoor exposure resists the corrosion that humidity accelerates. These elements sit out of sight and receive little attention until something changes at the surface, at which point the underlying cause is frequently found below the boards rather than on them.

Shade is a structural consideration rather than an accessory. Arbors and pergolas, louvered systems with adjustable openings, cabanas, covered porches, and screened porches each manage sun differently, and each carries different implications for the structure supporting them. The choice generally follows from how a household actually uses the space and where the sun falls during the hours that matter most.

Homeowners assessing a deck after extended heat can look for specific indicators. Boards that have cupped or warped, fasteners that have backed out or loosened, gaps that have widened noticeably between boards, and railing sections that feel different underfoot all warrant attention. Fading and surface discoloration are common on older wood and are typically cosmetic. Movement at the connection between the deck and the

house is a different matter and merits evaluation by someone trained to assess deck structures. Stairs and post bases, particularly where they meet soil or sit in areas that hold water, are worth the same scrutiny.

"A deck that feels different at the end of the summer than it did in the spring is telling you something," North said. "Most of the time it is minor. The point is to know which is which rather than guess."

North holds certification from the North American Deck and Railing Association in Deck Evaluation and Inspection, along with NADRA certification in Decks Done Right. He noted that seasonal heat is one of several environmental factors acting on outdoor structures in the region, alongside humidity, heavy rainfall, and the freeze and thaw cycles that arrive with Piedmont winters.

North Decks and Outdoor Living is a family owned company serving the greater Charlotte area from Concord. The company designs and builds custom decks, screened and covered porches, patios, arbors and pergolas, and related outdoor living structures, working in wood, composite, and PVC decking. Services include deck installation, repair, maintenance, and replacement.

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North Decks and Outdoor Living

North Decks and Outdoor Living is a family-owned custom deck builder based in Concord, NC, serving homeowners and businesses across Cabarrus County and the greater Charlotte area.

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