



Deck and Patio TuneUp Updates Substructure Guidance for Wetter Season

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Deck and Patio TuneUp has updated the guidance it provides to property owners regarding deck substructure condition, following NOAA's August 6, 2026 revision of its Atlantic hurricane season outlook. The company, a licensed North Carolina general contractor, says the revised outlook shifts the practical priority for coastal outdoor structures away from wind resistance and toward sustained moisture exposure.

NOAA raised the probability of a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season from 55 percent to 75 percent in its August update, with a 20 percent chance of a near-normal season and a 5 percent chance of above-normal activity. The agency attributed the revision to a very strong El Niño pattern expected to persist through the fall. NOAA states that the outlook is a general guide to overall seasonal activity, is not a landfall forecast, and does not predict levels of activity for any particular location.

The same climate pattern carries a secondary implication for outdoor structures. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center places the probability of El Niño continuing through the December 2026 to February 2027 period at 96

percent, and the pattern is historically associated with wetter cool-season conditions across the Southeast. A season with fewer high-wind events does not reduce the total water exposure a deck absorbs. It redistributes that exposure across a longer stretch of the calendar.

That distinction matters because the two exposure types affect a structure in different ways. Wind damage tends to be visible, and visible damage prompts repair. Moisture damage accumulates below the walking surface, where it is not observed until it has progressed far enough to reach the deck boards above it.

According to the USDA Forest Products Laboratory, wood decay fungi become active once wood moisture content remains sustained above a threshold level, which means prolonged periods of elevated humidity produce more cumulative deterioration than individual rainfall events. The American Wood Protection Association use category system classifies above-ground exposure and ground-contact exposure separately for this reason, specifying different preservative retention levels for each. The distinction reflects how differently a structural member performs depending on how long it stays wet and how readily it dries.

"The framing carries the load, not the boards, and the framing is the part nobody looks at," said Mark Pacheco, Co-Owner of Deck and Patio TuneUp. "A quieter storm season tends to make people less attentive to their outdoor structures, and this year that is the opposite of what conditions call for."

The regions of a substructure most affected by sustained moisture are those where air circulation is restricted and water drains slowly. Restricted airflow extends the period during which a structural member holds moisture, and that duration, rather than the volume of water involved, is what governs whether deterioration begins. Areas that dry quickly between wetting events behave differently from those that remain damp for extended periods, even when both receive the same rainfall.

Soil conditions influence the same process. The Natural Resources Conservation Service publishes drainage classifications for individual soil series through its Web Soil Survey, and soils across southeastern North Carolina range from excessively drained sands to poorly drained flats, sometimes within a single subdivision. Two properties on the same street can present substantially different moisture conditions at ground level, which affects how long the lower portion of a structure stays wet after rainfall.

Deck and Patio TuneUp evaluates these conditions as part of its deck repair and assessment work, which distinguishes surface weathering from structural change rather than treating the two as a single category. A deck can show significant surface wear while remaining structurally sound, and a deck can present an acceptable surface while its supporting members have begun to deteriorate. Separating the two determines whether a project is a repair or a replacement.

Water management is the corresponding consideration in new construction. Under decking systems channel

water away from the framing beneath an elevated deck, reducing the duration of moisture contact on the structural members below and creating usable dry space at ground level. On raised coastal homes, that area is frequently unused, and directing water away from the framing addresses the moisture exposure and the space at the same time.

Material selection carries similar weight. Composite and PVC decking behave differently from wood in sustained humidity, and the difference is a function of composition rather than of appearance. Deck and Patio TuneUp install composite, PVC, pressure-treated wood and hardwood decking, with the specification determined by the exposure conditions present at a given site.

Deck and Patio TuneUp is a licensed North Carolina general contractor that designs and builds custom decks, porches, pergolas and outdoor living structures for residential and commercial properties throughout southeastern North Carolina. The company was founded in 2013 and provides 3D design, permit acquisition and dedicated project management across the projects it builds.

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