

LVMC Decks Issues Shade Planning Guidance

Following Regional Heat Data

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LVMC Decks has released guidance for property owners on how sun exposure and shade placement affect the usability of outdoor living spaces, following a summer in which state and federal agencies documented elevated heat and worsening drought conditions across eastern Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection elevated several counties in the region from drought watch to drought warning status during 2026, citing high temperatures and declining groundwater levels. The Northeast Regional Climate Center reported that the first half of July ran hotter than normal across the entire Northeast.

Those conditions affect when an outdoor structure is comfortable to occupy rather than whether it can be built. A deck or patio positioned without regard to afternoon sun can sit unused during the hours a property owner most wants it, which is a design consideration rather than a maintenance one.

"People assume the deck is the project and shade is something you add later," said Norm Boell, co-founder of LVMC Decks. "Where the structure sits and which direction it faces gets decided once. Standing in the spot at four in the afternoon tells a homeowner more than a drawing does."

Orientation, existing tree canopy and the position of the house all influence how long a given area stays comfortable through a summer afternoon. Sun angle also shifts across the season, so an area shaded in July can sit in direct light by late September, when many property owners are still using outdoor space.

Conditions differ across the two counties where the company operates. Ground in Northampton County tends to be rolling and often sloped, while terrain across Monroe County and the wider Pocono region is rockier and more mountainous, with higher elevations bringing wider temperature swings. Those differences shape where an outdoor structure can sit on a given parcel and how much natural screening a property already has.

The company builds several structures that address sun exposure in different ways. Attached pergolas extend from the house and define a shaded area near an entry point, while freestanding pergolas can be positioned wherever exposure is heaviest. Solid roof covers provide continuous protection from both sun and rain, and covered porches integrate that protection into the structure of the home.

Screened porches and porch enclosure systems address a related question. Beyond shade, they extend the months an outdoor space stays usable by adding a barrier against insects and weather, which becomes relevant as summer heat gives way to autumn.

Privacy screens and privacy walls serve a separate purpose that often surfaces in the same conversation. Where a shade structure addresses sun angle, a screen or wall addresses sightlines from a neighboring property or a road, and both are typically resolved together during layout.

Shade placement also affects how other outdoor features function. Outdoor kitchens, bars and built-in seating depend on the surrounding area remaining comfortable during the hours they are used, so their placement is typically resolved alongside the shade structure rather than after it.

The space beneath an elevated deck presents another option. Underdeck systems channel water away from the framing above, which can turn the area below a raised structure into a covered space that stays usable when the surface above sits in full sun.

The company addresses these questions during its design phase, which includes three-dimensional modeling and two-dimensional floor plans produced before construction begins. That sequence allows orientation, structure height and shade coverage to be reviewed while changes still cost nothing but time.

Overhead structures introduce their own considerations. Any covered structure adds load to what supports it, so the framing and foundation are planned around the finished assembly rather than the deck surface alone. The company installs helical piles, American Groundscrew ground screws and traditional concrete footings depending on what a site requires.

Current drought status by county is published by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and the National Weather Service issues drought information statements covering the eastern portion of the state. Property owners planning outdoor projects can review conditions for their own county before scheduling work.

Norm Boell founded the company with his son Blaize Boell in December 2013. The business operates from Nazareth in Northampton County and East Stroudsburg in Monroe County, serving the Lehigh Valley and the

Pocono Mountains.

LVMC Decks is a family owned and operated deck and outdoor living builder. The company designs and builds custom decks, porches, patios, pergolas and outdoor living structures in wood, hardwood, composite and PVC, along with railing, lighting, framing, skirting and underdeck systems.

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LVMC Decks

LVMC Decks is a family-owned deck building company serving Monroe County and the Pocono region from our East Stroudsburg, PA location.

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