

LVMC Decks Details How Dry Ground Conditions Affect Deck Foundations

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LVMC Decks has released guidance for homeowners on how extended dry conditions influence foundation planning for decks and other outdoor structures, following drought declarations issued across the company's service area by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

The Department placed counties across eastern Pennsylvania under drought watch and drought warning status during 2026, citing below-normal precipitation and declining groundwater levels. Those declarations covered Monroe, Northampton, Lehigh and Carbon counties, which together form the core of the region where the company builds. The Northeast Regional Climate Center reported that temperatures across the Northeast ran above normal through the first half of July, compounding the moisture deficit.

Dry ground changes the conditions crews encounter during excavation rather than the engineering requirements themselves. Across much of the Pocono region, footing depth is governed by frost protection rather than soil weakness, and the underlying glacial till provides consistent bearing capacity. What shifts during a dry season is how the ground behaves while a foundation is being installed, and how surface conditions can obscure what sits beneath them.

"Hard, dry ground looks stable, and homeowners sometimes read that as a reason to skip a step," said Norm Boell, co-founder of LVMC Decks. "What we are looking at is what the ground does across a full year, not what it looks like in August. That is why the assessment happens before the design is finished rather than after."

Excavation conditions vary considerably 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. Those differences influence which foundation system suits a given parcel, and dry conditions can make an already difficult excavation harder.

The company installs three foundation types depending on what a site requires: helical piles, American Groundscrew ground screws, and traditional concrete footings. Site conditions determine the selection. Parcels with embedded boulders or shallow bedrock frequently call for a mechanically driven system where conventional excavation cannot reach the depth a jurisdiction requires.

Foundation planning carries additional weight for raised, multi-level and freestanding structures, which distribute load across broader spans and depend on consistent support at every footing location. Similar considerations apply to pergolas, porches, patios and privacy structures, since any ground-anchored structure shares the same dependency on the material beneath it.

Seasonal moisture matters beyond the excavation itself. Ground that dries and later takes on water through autumn rainfall and winter freeze-thaw cycling behaves differently across a year than it does during a single dry month. Foundations in the region are planned around that full annual range rather than the conditions present on the day work begins.

The company addresses foundation questions during its design phase, which includes three-dimensional modeling and two-dimensional floor plans produced before construction begins. That sequence allows footing placement, structure height and access for excavation equipment to be resolved before materials are ordered.

Drought status in Pennsylvania is updated by the Department of Environmental Protection and can be reviewed by county on the agency's website. The National Weather Service also issues drought information statements covering the eastern portion of the state. Homeowners planning outdoor projects can review current 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

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