

Excel Custom Decks Issues Storm Season Deck Inspection Guidance

September 03, 2026

FRANKSVILLE, WI - September 03, 2026 -

Excel Custom Decks has issued guidance for homeowners on inspecting aging deck structures during the peak of Wisconsin's severe weather season, when wind loading and sustained rainfall place stress on components that receive little attention during ordinary use.

August falls within the latter portion of the severe weather season across southeastern Wisconsin. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration maintains a public record of severe wind and storm events by county through its Storm Events Database, and the National Weather Service publishes regional severe weather climatology covering the area.

Wind acts on a deck differently than foot traffic does. Load concentrates at the connections rather than distributing across the walking surface, which is why a structural inspection begins at the attachments rather than at the boards. The American Wood Council addresses these load paths in its prescriptive guidance for residential wood deck construction, a document widely referenced by builders and building officials throughout the Upper Midwest.

"The boards are the last place to look, not the first," said Rob McDonald, Owner and President of Excel Custom Decks. "A deck that feels solid underfoot can still have a problem at the ledger, and the ledger is the connection that matters most."

The point where a deck attaches to a house carries the greatest share of the structural load and depends on flashing to keep water out of the wall behind it. Post bases at grade, structural hardware distributed through the frame, and railing attachments represent additional areas where condition is not apparent from above. Stairs and their landings warrant separate attention, as they receive concentrated traffic and depend on a stable base beneath them that can shift as the surrounding ground moves.

Inspections performed by Excel Custom Decks are carried out by inspectors certified through the North American Deck and Railing Association, an industry organization that maintains a certification program for deck inspection.

Drainage conditions become easier to evaluate during periods of frequent rainfall. Standing water near supporting components, ground that remains saturated well after a storm has passed, or altered runoff patterns following roofing or landscaping work all affect the environment around a structure over time. On elevated decks, an under deck system directs water away from the space below, and storm conditions offer an opportunity to observe whether water is moving as designed and whether visible components show wear.

Surrounding trees represent a factor that has changed markedly across the region. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources expects emerald ash borer to kill the overwhelming majority of susceptible ash trees statewide, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension notes that ash killed by the insect becomes brittle relatively quickly. Trees in that condition can fail under moderate wind rather than the severe wind a homeowner might anticipate. Extended dry weather earlier in the 2026 season added further stress, with the U.S. Drought Monitor classifying a substantial portion of Wisconsin as abnormally dry or in active drought during July.

"People assume it takes a major storm to bring a tree down onto a structure," McDonald said. "A dead ash does not need one. That is worth knowing before the wind arrives rather than after."

Material selection influences what is visible during an inspection but does not change the structural priorities. Wood, composite and PVC surfaces age differently and show wear in different ways, while the framing, fasteners and connections beneath the finished surface govern how the structure performs under load regardless of what is walked upon.

The age of a structure informs what an inspection is looking for. A deck built two decades ago has weathered many seasonal cycles, and hardware standards, fastener corrosion resistance and ledger attachment practices have all changed considerably during that period. Observations that appear minor when viewed individually can indicate a pattern when considered together across the frame.

The guidance notes that visible movement in a railing, separation at the point where a deck meets the house, or noticeable settlement beneath a post are conditions warranting evaluation by a qualified deck professional rather than continued observation alone. Structures exhibiting such conditions are best assessed before the following winter, when snow load adds to the demands already placed on the frame and access to the underside of a structure becomes more difficult.

Homeowners are also encouraged to document what they observe. Photographs taken after a storm

establish a reference point, making it possible to determine later whether a condition has remained stable or progressed over subsequent months, which is information a professional assessment can make use of.

Excel Custom Decks is a family owned deck builder founded in 2000 that designs and builds residential decks and outdoor living structures in Wisconsin. The company works with wood, composite and PVC decking and provides design consultation, framing, railing, lighting, under deck systems and deck inspection services.

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Excel Custom Decks is a family-owned deck builder based in Franksville, Wisconsin, serving Racine County homeowners since 2000. Owner Robert McDonald is a Deckorators Certified Pro Elite, and the company is a NADRA member firm with BBB accreditation.

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