

Deck It Details Board Movement After Three Dry Summers

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Deck It, a Massachusetts deck builder specializing in composite and PVC construction, has outlined how sustained low humidity across consecutive dry summers affects decking materials differently depending on what they are made from. The company said the distinction has become more visible as the state moves through a third consecutive year of drought.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has reported that the current drought began in 2024, with Level 3 Critical Drought declared in the Central and Northeast Regions in March 2026. U.S. Drought Monitor data showed approximately 67 percent of the state under active drought conditions in late July.

The mechanism behind material behavior in those conditions is well documented. According to the USDA Forest Products Laboratory Wood Handbook, wood is hygroscopic, meaning it exchanges moisture with the surrounding air until it reaches equilibrium with ambient conditions. As that moisture content falls, the wood shrinks. As it rises, the wood swells. The handbook notes that this dimensional change occurs unequally across the grain, which is why boards do not simply become smaller in a uniform way.

That unequal movement produces the effects homeowners notice. Checking, which is surface cracking along the grain, develops as the outer portion of a board dries faster than its interior. Cupping occurs when one face loses moisture at a different rate than the other. Fasteners loosen because the wood around them has changed dimension while the fastener itself has not.

"Wood is doing something all the time, and most of the year it happens slowly enough that nobody notices," said Patrick Byrne, co-founder of Deck It. "Three dry summers in a row is enough time for that movement to become visible on the same deck a homeowner has walked across every day without thinking about it."

Composite and PVC materials respond to the same conditions differently, because their behavior is governed by the properties of their components rather than by wood grain structure. Deck It said homeowners comparing materials should consult the manufacturer's published technical documentation for any specific product line, since performance varies by formulation, color and exposure, and general statements about a category do not reliably describe an individual product.

The distinction matters most on decks approaching the end of their service life. A board that has checked or cupped is a surface condition. A frame in which fasteners have worked loose at multiple connections is a structural one, and the two are not always visible at the same time or in the same place.

"The surface is what people judge, and the surface tells you the least," said Jake Zbikowski, co-founder of Deck It. "What matters is whether the connections underneath have stayed tight, and finding that out means getting under the deck rather than looking at it from above."

Framing is where the question ultimately settles. Deck It builds with pressure-treated lumber for structural components, and said the same moisture dynamics that affect a walking surface apply to joists, beams and posts, with the difference that framing is not visible once a deck is complete and therefore not subject to casual observation.

The company said homeowners considering resurfacing an existing deck should establish the condition of the frame before new material is ordered. Installing new decking over framing that has been through multiple seasons of dimensional movement produces a surface that looks new and performs according to what sits beneath it.

Timing also affects what an assessment shows. Conditions observed at the end of a dry summer differ from conditions after a wet spring, and a deck that appears settled in one season may present differently in another as moisture returns to the material and components take up water they have been without.

The North American Deck and Railing Association, of which Deck It is a member, publishes a consumer checklist covering areas homeowners can examine from accessible parts of a deck, including probing wood in suspected wet areas and inspecting fasteners for corrosion and looseness. The association describes the checklist as a starting point rather than a substitute for professional evaluation, noting that portions of a deck structure are not reachable without access underneath.

Deck It said the connection between the deck and the house warrants particular attention after extended dry periods, since that junction carries a substantial share of the structure's load and is also where water tends to collect when it does arrive.

Material selection for new construction involves the same considerations in reverse. How a deck will be used, how much direct exposure it receives across the day, and how the property drains all inform which materials suit a particular site, and those decisions are settled during the design phase rather than adjusted afterward.

Founded in 2017 and focused exclusively on decking since 2021, Deck It designs and builds custom decks, porches and sunrooms for residential and commercial properties across Central Massachusetts and the MetroWest region, operating from a showroom in Bolton. Services include new deck construction, deck replacement, framing, railing systems, deck lighting and under-deck drainage. The company is a TimberTech Platinum Pro and Trex Pro Platinum contractor. In 2025 it was named Top Contractor of the Northeast by TimberTech, an award recognizing the volume of TimberTech products installed.

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Deck It

Deck It is a Burlington, MA based, family-owned custom deck builder serving Central Massachusetts. Founded in 2017 by Jake and Pat, our team has focused exclusively on decking since 2021

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