

OE Decks & Outdoor Living Issues Late-Summer Deck Care Guidance

September 08, 2026

WAYNESVILLE, OH - September 08, 2026 -

OE Decks & Outdoor Living, a family-owned deck builder based in Waynesville, Ohio, has released late-summer guidance on how extended dry weather affects existing decks, following a shift in regional conditions through July.

Ohio entered the summer without drought. The State Climate Office of Ohio reported that June precipitation kept the state drought-free, while noting that declining soil moisture suggested drought could develop in more sensitive areas and that continued surface drying might propagate downward through July. By July 28, the U.S. Drought Monitor classified roughly 1 percent of Ohio as being in moderate drought, with an additional 4 percent abnormally dry.

That shift matters to homeowners more than most realize, because the effects on a deck are easy to mistake for ordinary aging.

Wood is the first material to show it. As boards give up moisture faster than they took it on, small cracks can open along the grain, a condition known as surface checking. Boards also shrink slightly as they dry, which is often why fasteners that sat flush in spring sit slightly proud by late August. Neither is unusual on its own, and neither means a deck is failing, but both are signals that the material has been working through the season.

"People assume rain is what damages a deck, so a dry summer feels like a break," said Ryan Rust, owner of OE Decks & Outdoor Living. "It is not. A long dry stretch pulls moisture out of the wood, and the boards move. Then the rain comes back in fall and they move again."

The ground participates as well. Much of Warren County sits on clay-rich glacial till, and clay contracts as it dries just as it expands when saturated. That movement is gradual and rarely dramatic in a single season, but it is worth noticing where a deck meets the house, and whether posts still sit as plumb as they did in

spring. Properties differ considerably here. A yard that drains quickly and a yard that holds water for days after a storm will not behave the same way through a dry August, even on the same street.

Composite and PVC decking respond differently. Both absorb far less moisture than wood and move less as a result, which is a significant part of why they have become common choices across a climate that swings between humid summers and freeze-thaw winters. Those surfaces still collect debris in board gaps through a dry summer, and material left in place when autumn rain returns holds moisture against the deck at exactly the wrong point in the year.

The company's guidance recommends a walk-around before fall. That means looking along the grain of wood boards for checking, checking whether fasteners have backed out, clearing board gaps and drainage channels of leaf litter and seed, and noting anything that has visibly changed since spring. Most of what a homeowner finds will be minor. The value is in finding it while the weather still allows for an unhurried response rather than discovering it in February.

Rust noted that timing is the practical point. "Late summer is the honest moment for a deck," he said. "Whatever the year did to it is visible right now, and it is easier to address before winter than after."

OE Decks & Outdoor Living plans to publish further seasonal guidance as regional conditions change through the year, including how winter freeze cycles affect existing structures differently than new construction.

OE Decks & Outdoor Living is a family-owned outdoor construction company based in Waynesville, Ohio, led by owner Ryan Rust. The company builds custom decks, porches, pergolas, pavilions and fences for homeowners across Southwest and Central Ohio, working in composite, PVC and wood.

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For more information about OE Decks & Outdoor Living, contact the company here:OE Decks & Outdoor LivingOE Decks Sales+19373737115sales@oedecks.com9754 N Cincinnati-Columbus Rd, Waynesville, OH 45068, United States

OE Decks & Outdoor Living

Website: <https://oedecks.com/>

Email: sales@oedecks.com

Phone: +19373737115