



Colorado Custom Covers and Decks Introduces Ember Resistance Guidance

September 08, 2026

MORRISON, CO - September 08, 2026 -

Colorado Custom Covers and Decks has introduced guidance for property owners building or maintaining decks in wildfire-prone terrain, drawing on research that locates the primary ignition risk in a place many homeowners overlook. Rather than the walking surface, testing by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety identifies the gaps between deck boards and the tops of supporting joists as where ember-initiated deck fires begin.

The guidance arrives as Colorado moves through a season of elevated risk. The state declared a drought emergency in June, more than 200,000 acres of burn scar have been recorded, and smoke degraded air quality along the Front Range through much of July. More than half of all Coloradans live in the wildland-urban interface, the area where homes and other structures meet wildland vegetation.

The Colorado State Forest Service has long identified decks as a vulnerable building component. Agency publications describe most decks as highly combustible, note that a deck's shape traps hot gasses, and

observe that flammable horizontal surfaces are especially at risk of ignition from airborne embers, which can travel more than a mile ahead of an active fire.

IBHS research refines where that vulnerability sits. In agency testing, embers accumulated in board gaps and on joist tops, and ignition occurred in those locations rather than across the open board face. Once a joist ignited, it burned for an extended period and exposed the underside of the boards above it. Where a joist did not become engulfed, the boards above it did not burn. That finding pointed to the structural support system, rather than the decking surface alone, as central to how a deck performs under ember attack.

Jonathan Moeller, owner of Colorado Custom Covers and Decks, said the research changes what a builder looks at first on a foothills site.

"The instinct is to ask which board to buy, and that is the wrong first question," Moeller said. "What the testing says is that the space under the deck and the debris sitting in the gaps deserve attention before anyone picks a color."

Material selection still carries weight, though the published findings are narrower than product marketing often suggests. National Fire Protection Association material citing IBHS testing indicates that medium-density softwood decking such as redwood or western red cedar is vulnerable to ember ignition, while most wood-plastic composites, higher-density tropical hardwoods, and fire-retardant treated decking products are less vulnerable. IBHS notes the finding applies to some brands of wood-plastic composite rather than to the category as a whole, which is why product-specific documentation matters considerably more than a general label on a sample board.

Density, not chemical composition, accounts for much of the difference in the hardwood category. The tropical species used in decking are substantially heavier than domestic softwoods, and that mass is what slows ignition. Federal guidance separately advises against plastic and composite products with underside channels or hollow construction, which have been shown to degrade or collapse quickly when exposed to fire. Solid-construction composite materials performed well in test conditions, though not as well as heavy timber.

No decking material is fireproof. Published testing measures how slowly a product ignites and how slowly flame travels across it, not whether it will burn under sustained direct exposure. Standardized test methods used in wildfire building codes evaluate combustible deck boards through an under-deck flame impingement exposure, and researchers have examined how reliably those methods distinguish between products available on the market.

The exposure that can most readily be reduced is the one beneath the structure. Research literature

distinguishes between under-deck flame impingement, which can be effectively mitigated by managing fuel in that area, and above-deck ember exposure, which is close to unavoidable in an interface setting. Colorado State Forest Service checklists direct homeowners to rake and remove pine needles and other flammable debris within five feet of the foundation of the home and the deck, and to repeat that work on a continuing basis as vegetation grows, dies and drops material each season. The same guidance addresses branches overhanging a roof and shrubs that resprout aggressively.

Moeller said that maintenance interval is what most often goes unaddressed on otherwise well-built properties.

"A deck built well six years ago is only as protected as the last time somebody cleared underneath it," he said. "That is seasonal work, and it does more for a house than most upgrades do."

Terrain compounds the question in the foothills west of Denver, where slope, limited access and mature vegetation frequently occur on the same parcel. Site conditions vary enough between neighboring properties that an on-site assessment precedes design work on the company's projects.

Property owners can consult published material from the Colorado State Forest Service, the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety, and the National Fire Protection Association for further reading on deck vulnerability and home ignition zone maintenance. Local fire authorities confirm whether a specific property falls within a mapped interface area.

Colorado Custom Covers and Decks is a locally owned builder of residential and commercial decks, patios, and covered structures serving Morrison and the Denver foothills. The company installs composite decking and tropical hardwoods, and is a Deckorators Certified Elite builder, a ProWood Ambassador, and a NADRA national award winner in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

###

For more information about Colorado Custom Covers and Decks, contact the company here:Colorado Custom Covers and DecksJonathan Moeller+17206066161j.moeller@coversanddecks.comPlateau Cir, Morrison, CO 80465, United States

Colorado Custom Covers and Decks

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

Email: j.moeller@coversanddecks.com

Phone: +17206066161

