



Deck and Patio TuneUp Updates Storm Season Substructure Guidance

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Deck and Patio TuneUp has updated the substructure guidance it provides to property owners following NOAA's August 6, 2026 revision of its Atlantic hurricane season outlook, which lowered rather than raised expected storm activity for the remainder of the season. The licensed North Carolina general contractor says a quieter wind season changes which conditions warrant attention on outdoor structures, and that the change runs counter to what many property owners assume.

NOAA raised the probability of a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season from 55 percent to 75 percent in its August update, with a 20 percent chance of a near-normal season and a 5 percent chance of above-normal activity. The agency attributed the revision to a very strong El Niño pattern expected to persist through the fall. NOAA reported that the season had produced two named tropical storms, Arthur and Bertha, and no hurricanes as of that update.

NOAA states that its seasonal outlook is a general guide to overall expected activity, is not a landfall forecast,

and does not predict levels of activity for any particular location. The agency notes that hurricane-related impacts can occur in any season regardless of the seasonal projection.

For outdoor structures, the practical effect of a below-normal forecast is not the absence of exposure but a change in its character. Wind events concentrate stress into short periods and leave visible evidence. Sustained water exposure distributes stress across months and leaves little evidence above the walking surface. The first prompts inspection. The second frequently does not.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center places the probability of El Niño continuing through the December 2026 to February 2027 period at 96 percent. The pattern is historically associated with wetter cool-season conditions across the Southeast, which means the months following the storm season carry their own moisture load independent of tropical activity.

"A quiet season tends to make people stop thinking about their outdoor structures, and that is the part worth pushing back on," said Mark Pacheco, Co-Owner of Deck and Patio TuneUp. "The framing carries the load, and the framing is the part nobody looks at in a year when nothing dramatic happens."

The guidance the company provides addresses conditions that develop gradually rather than during a single event. The USDA Forest Products Laboratory documents that wood decay fungi become active once wood moisture content remains sustained above a threshold level, which places the emphasis on how long a structural member stays wet rather than on how much water reaches it during any one period.

Site drainage governs much of that duration. The Natural Resources Conservation Service publishes drainage classifications for individual soil series through its Web Soil Survey, and soils across southeastern North Carolina range from excessively drained sands to poorly drained flats. Two properties within the same subdivision can differ in how long the ground beneath a structure holds water after rainfall.

Conditions also vary within a single property. Areas beneath a deck with restricted air movement retain moisture longer than exposed areas receiving identical rainfall, and shaded portions of a structure dry more slowly than portions in direct sun. Those differences occur across distances measured in feet rather than across a region.

The American Wood Protection Association use category system reflects the same principle in how it classifies exposure. Above-ground applications and ground-contact applications are specified separately, with different preservative retention levels required for each, because the two positions differ in how long a member stays wet and how readily it dries afterward.

Deck and Patio TuneUp evaluates existing structures through its deck repair and assessment work, which

distinguishes surface weathering from structural change rather than treating the two as a single condition. A structure can show substantial surface wear while remaining sound, or present an acceptable surface while its supporting members have begun to deteriorate. Separating the two determines the scope of any work that follows.

In new construction, water management addresses the same conditions before they develop. Under decking systems channel water away from the framing beneath an elevated deck, reducing the duration of moisture contact on the structural members below while creating dry usable space at ground level. On raised properties, that area is frequently unused.

Material selection contributes as well. Deck and Patio TuneUp install composite, PVC, pressure-treated wood and hardwood decking, and select among them according to the exposure conditions present at each site. Performance characteristics for any specific product are documented in that manufacturer's published technical data and, where applicable, in evaluation reports issued by ICC Evaluation Service.

The company notes that circumstances warranting a professional assessment typically include visible movement at a railing or stair, boards that have cupped or lifted, standing water that persists beneath a structure after other areas have drained, or a structure that has not been examined in several years.

Deck and Patio TuneUp is a licensed North Carolina general contractor that designs and builds custom decks, porches, pergolas and outdoor living structures for residential and commercial properties throughout southeastern North Carolina. The company was founded in 2013 and provides 3D design, permit acquisition and dedicated project management across the projects it builds.

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