

Deck Inspections:

International Code Council

Highlighting other common problems, the International Code Council (ICC) suggests looking for the following when inspecting decks, balconies, or porches:

- Ledger boards affixed to homes incorrectly - Screwed to house
- Incorrectly sized lumber
- Wrong joist hangers
- No nails through joist hangers
- Footings not poured
- Footings poured incorrectly
- Split or rotting wood
- Loose or missing nails, screws, or anchors where the structure is attached to the building
- Missing, damaged, or loose support beams and planking
- Wobbly handrails or guardrails



U.S. Forest Products Laboratory Deck Research

Our experience reflects a problem that occurs nationally. The U. S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, studied five years of newspaper articles on deck collapses from around the country while researching a deck-building manual. The research showed that "nearly every collapsed deck had been attached with nails, rather than bolts, and investigators had pinpointed nails as the cause of the collapse."

If you are a homeowner looking to build, expand or replace a deck to be affixed to your home, it's important to be sure your project is done right. Whether you are doing it yourself or you are hiring a contractor for the project, be sure to avoid the following mistakes.

Contractors Hall Of Shame: Deck Problems Needing Correction

By Jeremy Woldt

Decks seem like very straight forward projects. Everyone has used decks and in most cases, there are no unique materials with which people are unfamiliar.

The problem is, building a deck is not as simple as it seems because it still requires proven building techniques and the knowledge to do them correctly.

According to the North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA), new and replacement decks amount to about 2.5 million new decks annually in the United States. Many of these are done by inexperienced homeowners, friends or in some cases contractors that do not follow the guidelines.

Is Your Deck An Accident Waiting To Happen?

Poorly constructed decks can result in property damage and even in injury to people on the deck at the time of failure or collapse. In fact, according to the NADRA, between 2000 and 2008, there were at least 30 reported deaths from deck collapse. More than 75 percent of people involved in a deck collapse were injured. Most collapses occur on decks that are more than 20 years of age or older. With over 40 million decks in the United States it is important that you check the safety of your deck. Safety checklist.

In Sun Prairie, we often see decks collapsing because of ledger board issues. Nails are often the problem in that they do not perform as well as bolts and they simply pull out. Unfortunately, nails are easier to use and are the favorite choice weekend carpenters, but they can be the source of problems.



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Top 10 Mistakes of Deck Building

- 1 Not Obtaining A Permit To Build A Deck**

Safety is the main focus of following the permitting process. Obtaining a permit is the most overlooked step in deck building.
- 2 Improper Or Missing Flashing**

Water management is an important consideration with every deck. Water can soak into your home at the point where the deck connects to the house. Properly installed flashing will prevent erosion to the structural integrity of your deck and home.
- 3 Improper Attachment To Structure Of House (Incorrect Fasteners)**

How your deck attaches to your home determines its safety and durability. This is an area that you may want to overbuild beyond the minimum standards or requirements. Material, size, and quality are critical.
- 4 Undersized Footings**

Undersized footings can lead to sagging, warping or collapse. Footings create a solid base for the posts of your deck.
- 5 Improper Deck Materials**

Weather resistant materials are necessary on exterior structures to prevent rot or deterioration. There are specific fasteners for exterior conditions and it is critical that the proper fasteners are used. Select the materials specifically made to withstand the elements.
- 6 Missing/Improper Joist Hangers**

Joist hangers are an essential element in creating reinforced connections and supported decking. Nails alone are not enough to counteract the shear forces on a structural member. Ensure the safety of your deck by using properly sized, engineered, and correctly installed joist hangers.
- 7 Undersized Structural Members**

An undersized structural member increases the risk of deck collapse and can create sagging and improper weight distribution. Avoid deck warping and collapsing by properly sizing all members and components of your deck.
- 8 Improper Railing Height & Baluster Spacing**

Railings and balusters help to avoid accidents and injuries. Local building codes provide the guidance needed for measurements.
- 9 Stairs With Open Risers Or Missing Railings**

Avoid injuries and create a tailored look by covering the risers. Open space between steps invites accidents. Hand railings are fundamental to the safety of a stairwell.
- 10 Unsealed Wood**

Unsealed wood decks can age and deteriorate faster than sealed decks. Proper sealing prolongs the appearance and life of a deck well beyond unsealed decks. Avoid the "worn out" look by sealing it.

Having a great deck can add an entirely new dimension to your home and your family's enjoyment of you home and yard. In Wisconsin, a well designed deck can one of the most used "rooms" in your house in warmer weather. Our goal is to be sure it's safe for everyone.