COMPOSITE LUMBER MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

CLMA Technical Bulletin

All about Composite Decking

Composite decking is designed and manufactured to provide low-maintenance usage, enjoyment, and dependability. Composite decking is offered in an ever changing and expanding array of colors, textures, patterns, and finishes. Most composite decking is manufactured primarily from wood fibers and plastic, but other materials may be incorporated into the mixture to provide the desired quality and characteristics. The result is a weather-resistant deck board with no splintering and warping. Composite decking is also rot resistant and doesn't appeal to termites.

A major attraction of composite decking compared to wood decking is that composite decking requires significantly less ongoing maintenance. Composite decking doesn't need to be stained or refinished, reducing the quantity of chemicals needed for deck construction. Like many quality materials exposed to the elements, an occasional cleaning with soapy water and a soft bristle brush can help maintain the appearance of the decking by removing dirt, grime, algae, and most mildew or mold.

Similar to wood decking, some composite decking can be relatively easily scratched or scuffed. Also, the fibers in composite decking may be discolored by food, grease, or suntan lotion. Capped composite decking, with enhanced surface texture, patterns, and wear, fade and scratch resistance, is the most commonly purchased composite decking.

Composite decking is commonly available in lighter earth-tone colors, and the newer capped composite decking is available in darker colors. As with many materials exposed to the sun and rain, composite decking may fade slightly over time, although some composite decking is specifically made to be more fade resistant. On a hot sunny day, composite decking may get quite warm to the touch, with darker colors likely to absorb more of the sun's heat energy.

Deck boards in lengths up to 20 feet help reduce end joints on the deck surface. Several fastening methods are available for composite decking. Surface fastening of composite deck boards may be done with manufacturer-recommended self-drilling screws made for this specific application. More elegant to many consumers is the composite decking fastened to the framing with "hidden" fasteners, of which a variety are available. The least preferred method, although still accepted by some manufacturers, involves screws driven through installer-drilled holes in the surface of the decking.

Common deck-building tools such as circular saws and electric drills / drivers are normally all that is needed for installing composite decking.

In addition to the composite decking, most companies offer a wide variety of matching or complementary materials such as guard systems, handrails, and fascia boards to provide the finishing touches on a deck.

CLMA

The Composite Lumber Manufacturers Association is the national trade association representing the manufacturers and suppliers of composite lumber to the residential and commercial building construction markets.

For over 10 years, CLMA has advanced the growth of the composite deck and railing industry through proactive technical, advocacy, and awareness efforts.

CLMA develops technical bulletins in an effort to address common questions about wood plastic composite decking and railing systems. This document is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to revoke or change the requirements or specifications of the individual manufacturers or local, state and federal building officials that have jurisdiction in your area. Individual manufacturers should be consulted for specifics about their respective products.

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