



5 Reasons Why You Should Avoid Using Composite on your Deck (at All Costs)!

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I've been fortunate enough to have worked in the home decking industry now for about 20 years. I believe I've worked with just about every material available in building decks. Over the years, I've developed a particular objection to a decking material, namely composite. If you're not familiar with the composite material, it's described as a deck board manufactured from wood fiber and plastic with the idea of being more durable.

Early on, this building material was touted by various suppliers and authorities as the 'ideal decking material' that would change the world of decking by itself. Through the years, I've gone from wide-eyed believer to optimist to skeptic to (now) full-blown critic. And it's not that I haven't given the material a fair try since I've built numerous decks using it. I'd like to share five reasons why I believe you should drop the idea of using composite to build your deck.

1. **Composite isn't as low maintenance as you might believe.** When the material was first introduced as a decking material, the suppliers touted the materials as "maintenance free". Everyone was thrilled with the concept and the decks went up. Then, about 3 years later, there was a rumble from homeowners. In came reports of cracking and wear. Suppliers went out to investigate, repairs were made, manufacturing processes changed (allegedly), and the material was then marketed as "low maintenance". But that's not the end of the story. In spite of the backpedalling and the changes that have been made, a groundswell of lawsuits has developed around composite material failing with injuries. Don't believe me? Then I suggest you do a simple Google search for the work "litigation" along with whatever composite you're considering (or just "composite decking complaints"). I think it might be an eye opener. For me, the bottom line is that I've had a problem with every composite deck I've ever built.
2. **Manufacturers have not taken the steps they've needed to take.** I don't want to be a complete critic with composites as they do have a couple of features that are fine. But the real problem with the concept is that the manufacturers, even as of today, have never thoroughly tested the products they've put out in the marketplace. The revenue continues to come in, and they seem satisfied with handling the



complaints on the back end. I frankly don't know if they care much about putting a stellar product out there. As I mentioned before, I've never seen one.

3. **Composite is pricey.** I don't know if you've priced out deck composite or not, but it tends to be on the high side. The justification is that it's manufactured along with all the benefits the manufacturers sell you on. But, as I've said earlier, many of the benefits are simply not true. There's no reason you should be paying more to a manufacturer who you may potentially sue for selling you an *inferior* product. My opinion is that the manufacturers have been better marketers of this material over the years than good manufacturers.
4. **Composite is aesthetically overrated.** Again, the manufacturers did a great job of presenting a lot of options to homeowners. There are different "mixes" that make up the material, along with different colors. But the feedback I hear from others is that it looks and feels fabricated and artificial. I've had homeowners tell me afterwards that they wished they had gone the more natural route. And I can share with you that there's nothing sadder than sitting on a deck with a homeowner sharing that regret with you.
5. **Composite isn't wood.** This brings me to the chief overriding problem with composite. And that's its desire to be something it's not, namely wood. The whole idea behind composite was that it was essentially going to be "better than wood". I can almost hear Mother Nature laughing when a manufacturer's rep makes this claim today. (I truly believe that she, Mother Nature, is taking her revenge on all of us for trying to out-do her.) All of the efforts by composite in comparing itself to wood today simply fall flat – it's not as good-looking as wood, it doesn't feel as good as wood, it's not as durable as wood, and it's more expensive (both short-term and long-term). I don't know about you, but it looks like wood is pretty far ahead in just about every respect!

I think I've pretty well laid out my position in regards to composite. The obvious truth is that through years of experience, I don't believe composite compares to natural wood (particularly in the hands of a wood craftsman).