

# INSPECT THE DECK

May is deck safety month, and what better time to remind homeowners of the basics of inspecting and maintaining their decks so their investment will last for years to come. Maintaining outdoor living areas isn't complicated. Here are some simple tips to keep decks and more looking new all year long.

## Inspect deck boards and hardware

For both wood and composite decks, inspecting the deck surface, individual boards, and hardware — connectors and fasteners — carefully once a year is key to its longevity. Here are the top safety tips for all decking materials to ensure basic safety and security:

1. Make sure the support posts haven't shifted and the foundation is still strong
2. Inspect the deck surface to discover any loose boards and replace any that are damaged.
3. Check the hardware to see if any are missing or rusting and replace.
4. Check to make sure nails, if used, haven't loosened, or raised, and consider replacing them with deck screws for a solid grip long-term.

## General maintenance

Develop a simple maintenance plan and share it with homeowners to ensure decks, railing, and accessories are part of their regular outdoor maintenance routine. Here are a couple of easy tips to share:

- A good sweep: Use a broom to sweep off debris like dirt, pollen, pine needles, and leaves. That may be all that is needed depending on the material. Keep in mind, the longer it stays on the deck, the harder it is to clean. Regular sweeping will keep debris at bay.
- Hose it off: Use a standard garden hose to rinse off residual dirt and hard to sweep debris.

Today, composite decks are gaining popularity as an alternative decking material. While composite materials don't need as much upkeep as wood decking, the homeowner must keep a minimum level of care to keep it looking like new longer. Many of the tips we offer will work for composite decking. However, follow the manufacturer's care and maintenance recommendations.

While wood is still the most common decking material and has a beautiful aesthetic, it does require a bit more maintenance steps to keep it looking fresh. Upon installation, homeowners have the option of sealing or letting the wood naturally patina. Depending on the type of wood used — cedar, pressure-treated, or modified — it may need protection from the elements, including weather, molds, and mildew, and more regular maintenance.

Decks, railings, and accessories are an extension of the home. Help your customers and homeowners keep their investment looking new all year long and for years to come by adding a regular maintenance routine.

Railings are an extension of the homeowner's deck and should be inspected and cleaned every year. Over time, fasteners may loosen and can be easily adjusted and tightened, or discolor, which is normal, and does not affect its integrity or strength. For regular maintenance, use our E-Z Clean, two-part cleaner, and protectant as a complete package for all cable railing installations.

