



**My neighbor built his deck using a set of typical deck plans he got from the City instead of using deck plans professionally designed for his property. Can he do that?**

It's possible that your neighbor chose to obtain his deck permit utilizing the American Wood Council's Prescriptive Residential Wood Deck Construction Guide as provided for on the City of Henderson's webpage in lieu of a site specific set of stamped plans. When applying for a permit, you may use the Wood Deck Construction Guide for many different size and shape decks provided you follow the limitations and restrictions outlined within that document. Please note, however, should it be determined upon inspection that you have not followed the prescribed guidelines, you may then be required to submit custom designed plans or otherwise provide adequate documentation that you fully comply with all applicable requirements of the building code.

**I've been building decks for 30 years, and not a single one has ever collapsed. Do I have to comply with these typical deck details?**

If the deck you are building complies with the criteria set forth in the applicable building code and can be documented as doing so, then you do not need to use the provided Wood Deck Construction Guide or submit custom plans for each project.

**What are the basic limitations for using the Wood Deck Construction Guide?**

The Wood Deck Construction Guide applies to only single level residential wood decks. It has provisions for both supported and free-standing decks. Joist spans are limited to 18' to insure appropriate design of beams and footings. If longer joist spans are necessary, they must be designed and all other components must be analyzed to insure appropriate load paths.

**What would prohibit me from using the Wood Deck Construction Guide?**

You may not be permitted to utilize the Wood Deck Construction Guide if you exceed any of the limitations as specified in the Guide. However, based on the deviation, you may still be able to use much of the aids and assistance provided by the Guide. If you have such a situation, feel free to talk with a building inspector prior to beginning your project.

**Can I use specific sections within the Guide, and only submit drawings for any customized components?**

Yes. Any conditions which deviate from the typical details must be drawn to scale and thoroughly detailed to adequately show the intended design, and to include all fasteners.

**I recently bought a home that already has a small deck. I would now like to enlarge it. Should we tear out the old deck, or can we use the Guide to add onto the existing one?**

You may use the Guide as long as the new deck addition does not attach structurally to the old deck. In most cases, this would result in having two separate decks constructed side-by-side. If you desire to make a change to the old deck, or structurally connect the two decks together, then you may not be able to use the Guide. For a final determination, please consult with a building inspector.

**I just finished building my deck per the Wood Deck Construction Guide. I now want to remove the back door and install wider French doors. May I install the new door using the same permit?**

That depends. If you have received your final inspection or if a different contractor is to perform the work, a new permit must be obtained. However, if you have not yet received your final inspection and the same contractor will be responsible for installing the new doors, then you may be able to amend your existing permit to include the new work.

The headers over each opening support the weight of the wall itself, any second or third story floor weight, plus roof weight (snow loads). Wider openings will require new headers that must be carefully designed to insure that the new header and framing around each door/window will safely support all the loads.

**Can I place a hot tub on my deck?**

The addition of a hot tub places a tremendous amount of concentrated weight on a small area of decking. A hot tub should never be placed on an existing deck without a design analysis to insure the deck's structural stability after placing the hot tub. In most cases, additional reinforcing will be required.

**Can I build a screened-in porch or a sunroom on my existing deck?**

Zoning regulations, such as setback restrictions, may prohibit your deck from being converted to a screened-in porch or sunroom. If zoning poses no restrictions, then the existing deck must be first evaluated and designed to specifically resist the additional loads imposed by any new construction, such as snow and/or wind loads.

**I built my deck exactly according to your Guide, and then added a permanent awning. The inspector made me remove the awning. Why can't I have an awning on my deck?**

The answer to this question more than likely involves zoning ordinances and not building code requirements. A deck that has no coverings or enclosures is considered an open deck. If you add an awning, the deck is then classified as an addition or enclosed deck and, therefore, must meet the set-back requirements for any home addition. Also, a permanent awning is considered a roof and any imposed loads on the deck must be taken

into account.

**I would like to use your Guide, but someone told me that I cannot use composite green decking/railing materials. Why would the City of Hendersonville stop me from using recycled or synthetic products?**

You may certainly use the Guide and substitute the traditional wood decking with any *approved* composite or synthetic product. This should be addressed before your permit is issued. The inspector will need to verify and approve the decking material before it can be used.

You may also substitute an approved rail system. This should also be approved prior to obtaining your permit. Part of the approval process should address the attachment detail of the rail system to the deck.

**How can I determine what type of band board I have in my house if I have a finished basement?**

Band boards are typically attached to the ends of the floor joists in order to prevent the floor joists from toppling over. Many band boards may also support the load imposed from a deck through the connection of the ledger board. If you have an unfinished basement, you can look between the joists to determine their composition. However, finished basements present more of a problem. You may consider these options:

- If available, your home's original building plans will specify the type/dimensions of the band board. If your original builder is still located in the area, he may be able to provide you with the necessary information.
- Look in an unfinished area like a laundry or utility room since these areas are generally not finished.
- Check a neighbor's house that is similar to yours that does not have a finished basement.
- If all other methods fail, you can always choose to use a free-standing deck.

**I have a brick veneer on the back of my house. Can I attach a ledger board to it?**

The building code stipulates that absolutely nothing shall be supported by, or attached to, a brick or stone veneer. If you do want to attach to a veneered house by transferring the load from the ledger board through the veneer to the band board, a correctly designed attachment detail must be approved by the inspector before installation.

**I purchased notched 4x4 posts from a local home center store to use as my guard post. The inspector rejected it. Do I have to completely rebuild my guardrail?**

The Guide specifically states that guard posts shall not be notched. The structural capacity of the post is significantly reduced when it is cut or notched. Given the importance of a deck railing, notched posts are not permitted if using the Guide.

**Last year, I used the Wood Deck Construction Guide to build my deck. Can I add a small stairway this year without getting another permit?**

No. Once you have received a final inspection on your deck, that particular permit was closed and cannot be used again. The addition of a small stairway may seem incidental, but it does require a permit so it can be inspected for code compliance.

**Why can't I use a pre-fabricated galvanized connector between the 6x6 posts and the double beam?**

Most metal connector companies do not manufacture an adequate connector which will connect a double beam to the top of a 6x6 post in a 1.85 oz/sf zinc coating. The notched 6x6 bolted to the double beam, as shown in the Guide, provides the most effective and least expensive connection.

**Can I use a slightly larger nail instead of buying exterior screws?**

No. The connections in the Wood Deck Construction Guide were designed specifically for the fasteners as shown. Whenever an option is available, it is so labeled in the Guide. Wood screws have a greater ability to resist pull-out forces than a nail, and the loads in some connections dictate the need for wood screws.

**I want to build my deck per the Guide so I don't have to draw up custom plans. Where do my beams have to be placed?**

If you are attaching your deck to your house, the location of the beam would be based on your choice of joist. The beam would be placed at or within 3' of the end of the joists. If you are building a free-standing deck, an additional beam will be required within 3' of the house.

**I want to use 3 members for my beam. What will be required on the plans?**

The size of each member, how each of the 3 members are attached together, and a complete detail of the beam-to-post connection.

**I would like to have a starburst in my guard infill, instead of what is shown in the Guide. If I am going to do the rest of the deck per the Guide, do I still have to submit complete custom plans?**

You can just provide a guard infill detail showing the span of the top rail, the top rail attachment to the post, the post attachment to the deck, the length of the pickets, and the attachment of the pickets to the top rail and bottom rail or deck. Then just note on the detail that the remaining deck will meet the Wood Deck Construction Guide.

**May I use a deck design provided by Lowe's, Home Depot or other building materials supplier that is providing my deck package?**

Yes, provided they use an approved design software and provides you with a copy of the design. Submit a copy of this design when obtaining your deck permit.