NEW BRUNSWICK DECKS

Deck Repair & Maintenance

Questions about fixing damaged decks, replacing boards, structural repairs, and ongoing maintenance in NB's climate.

17 Expert Answers from Deck IQ

newbrunswickdecks.com/construction-brain

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Q1

What is the cost of replacing deck stair stringers in Moncton NB?

Replacing deck stair stringers in Moncton typically costs $400-$1,200 for a standard set of stairs, depending on the number of steps, materials, and complexity of the installation.

The cost breakdown for stringer replacement includes both materials and labor. For a typical 3-4 step deck stair in Moncton, you're looking at **$150-$300 in materials** for pressure-treated 2x12 stringers, treads, and fasteners. Professional installation adds **$250-$900 in labor**, depending on whether it's a straightforward replacement or requires modifications to meet current building code requirements.

Material costs vary based on your choices. Pressure-treated 2x12 stringers (the most common choice in NB) run about $25-$40 each, and most residential deck stairs need 2-3 stringers. Cedar stringers cost 40-50% more but offer better appearance and natural rot resistance. You'll also need new treads if the old ones can't be reused - pressure-treated 2x10 or 2x12 treads cost $15-$25 per step. Don't forget galvanized carriage bolts, joist hangers, and exterior-grade screws, which add another $50-$100 to the material cost.

Labor complexity significantly affects the price in Moncton's market. A simple like-for-like replacement where the new stringers match the old configuration runs $250-$400 in labor. However, if your existing stairs don't meet current NB Building Code requirements, the contractor may need to modify the rise and run dimensions, add proper handrails, or adjust the landing - this can push labor costs to $600-$900. Stairs with more than 4 steps, curved designs, or those requiring structural modifications to the deck frame will be at the higher end of the range.

Timing matters for this type of work in Moncton. The construction season runs May through October, with peak availability in June through August. Booking during shoulder seasons (May or September-October) often results in better pricing and faster scheduling. Winter repairs are possible but may include cold-weather surcharges of 10-20%.

Signs you need professional help include stringers that are sagging, cracked, or showing rot at ground contact points. In Moncton's climate with 1.2-meter frost depth and heavy freeze-thaw cycles, stringer bottoms are particularly vulnerable to moisture damage. If the existing stairs don't have proper footings or landing pads, a professional can ensure the replacement meets code requirements and will handle our Maritime weather conditions.

Most homeowners should hire a professional for stringer replacement since it involves structural calculations, proper attachment to the deck frame, and ensuring code compliance for safety. However, if you're replacing identical stringers on a simple 2-3 step stair and have carpentry experience, this can be a DIY project with careful attention to measurements and fastening methods.

Need help finding a qualified deck contractor in Moncton? New Brunswick Decks can match you with local professionals who understand our climate requirements and building codes.

Q2

How do I prevent porcupine damage to my deck in rural New Brunswick?

Porcupines can cause significant damage to decks in rural New Brunswick by chewing on railings, posts, and any wood treated with salt or containing natural salts from Maritime air exposure. The key is making your deck less appealing through physical barriers, taste deterrents, and removing attractants.

Porcupines are drawn to decks for several reasons specific to our Maritime climate. The salt residue from winter road treatments that gets tracked onto decks, combined with the natural salt air that penetrates wood fibers, creates an irresistible sodium source for these animals. They also seek shelter under elevated decks during harsh NB winters, and the wood itself provides essential minerals their diet lacks.

Physical barriers work best for long-term protection. Install hardware cloth (1/4-inch mesh) around the perimeter of elevated decks, extending it 12-18 inches below ground level and angling it outward at the bottom to prevent digging underneath. For deck railings, wrap vulnerable areas with metal flashing or hardware cloth during peak activity periods (late fall through early spring). Porcupines are excellent climbers but poor jumpers, so focus protection on ground-level access points rather than trying to fence the entire deck perimeter.

Taste deterrents can provide additional protection without harming the animals. Commercial predator urine (coyote or fox) applied around deck perimeters every 2-3 weeks can be effective, though you'll need to reapply after heavy rains - common in our Maritime climate. Some rural NB homeowners report success with cayenne pepper mixed with petroleum jelly applied to vulnerable wood surfaces, though this needs frequent reapplication and may affect wood stain adhesion.

Remove attractants around your deck area. Don't store salt, pet food, or bird seed near the deck. Clean up any spilled road salt from winter deck maintenance promptly. If you have fruit trees or gardens nearby, harvest produce promptly and clean up fallen fruit. Porcupines are also attracted to plywood and OSB sheathing under decks, so consider upgrading to less palatable materials during renovations.

Timing matters in New Brunswick's climate. Porcupine activity peaks during late fall and winter when other food sources become scarce. Install protective measures by October, before the first significant snowfall. They're most active at night, so if you're hearing chewing sounds after dark, act quickly - porcupine damage accelerates once they establish a feeding pattern on your deck.

For structural damage assessment, porcupines typically chew railings, balusters, and deck board edges rather than load-bearing components. However, extensive chewing can compromise railing strength and safety. **If you discover significant structural damage to railings or posts, have a professional evaluate the integrity before the next winter's snow load.** Minor surface damage to deck boards usually doesn't affect structural performance but should be sanded and re-stained to prevent moisture penetration in our freeze-thaw climate.

When to call for professional help: If porcupines have taken up residence under your deck, contact a licensed wildlife control operator rather than attempting removal yourself. For extensive deck damage, New Brunswick Decks can help you find local contractors experienced with wildlife damage repairs who understand how to reinforce vulnerable areas while maintaining your deck's appearance and code compliance.

Q3

How much does structural deck beam repair cost in New Brunswick?

Structural deck beam repair in New Brunswick typically costs $2,000-$5,000 for most residential projects, depending on the extent of damage, beam size, and accessibility. Simple beam reinforcement might run $1,500-$2,500, while full beam replacement on an elevated deck can reach $4,000-$6,000.

The cost varies significantly based on several factors. **Beam size and span** are major drivers — replacing a single 2x10 beam under a small deck costs much less than replacing multiple LVL (laminated veneer lumber) beams supporting a large multi-level structure. **Accessibility** also impacts pricing dramatically. Ground-level beam work is straightforward, but replacing beams on a second-story deck requires temporary support systems, potentially a crane, and much more labor.

Material costs for the beam itself are relatively modest — a 16-foot pressure-treated 2x12 beam runs $60-$100, while an engineered LVL beam of the same span costs $200-$400. However, the labor to safely remove the old beam, install temporary supports, and properly attach the new beam represents 70-80% of the total cost. In New Brunswick's climate, contractors often discover additional rot damage once they start the repair, particularly where beams connect to posts or ledger boards.

Timing matters significantly in New Brunswick. Structural repairs requiring concrete work (new footings or post anchors) must be completed between May and October when ground conditions allow proper excavation and concrete curing. Emergency repairs in winter cost 20-30% more due to challenging conditions and the need for temporary weatherproofing.

Signs you need beam repair include visible sagging, cracks in the beam, soft or spongy spots when pressed, or the deck feeling bouncy when walked on. In New Brunswick's freeze-thaw climate, beam problems often start small but accelerate quickly once moisture penetrates the wood. What begins as minor checking can become structural failure within 1-2 seasons if not addressed.

This is definitely professional work. Deck beams carry the entire load of the deck structure, and improper repair can lead to catastrophic failure. The work involves calculating load requirements, potentially obtaining permits, installing temporary supports, and ensuring proper connections that meet NB Building Code requirements. Many beam repairs also reveal the need for upgraded footings to reach proper frost depth (1.2-1.5 meters depending on your region), adding to the scope.

Get multiple quotes as pricing varies considerably between contractors. Some specialize in structural repairs and can often reinforce rather than replace, saving significant cost. Others may recommend full replacement for long-term peace of mind. Either approach can be valid depending on the beam's condition and your long-term plans for the deck.

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Q4

What is the average lifespan of a pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick?

A well-built and properly maintained pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick will typically last 20 to 30 years for the structural framing and 15 to 20 years for the deck boards, though actual longevity depends heavily on the quality of construction, ongoing maintenance, and exposure to the province's Maritime weather patterns. These numbers are somewhat shorter than what homeowners in drier Canadian climates might experience, because New Brunswick's combination of freeze-thaw cycling, high humidity, heavy snowfall, and coastal salt air places unique stresses on outdoor wood structures.

The structural components of a deck, meaning the posts, beams, and joists, generally outlast the decking surface because they are made from larger-dimension lumber that takes longer to deteriorate and they are somewhat sheltered from direct UV exposure. In New Brunswick, posts set in concrete footings that extend below the frost line of 48 to 60 inches will remain stable for decades, provided the concrete was poured to shed water away from the post base. The most common point of structural failure in the province is the ledger board connection to the house, where trapped moisture from snow and ice can cause rot within 10 to 15 years if proper flashing was not installed during construction.

Deck boards take the brunt of New Brunswick's weather. From November through March, boards endure repeated freeze-thaw cycles where absorbed moisture expands and contracts within the wood fibres, gradually opening checks and splits that allow even more water penetration. A typical Fredericton or Moncton winter can see 40 or more freeze-thaw cycles in a single season. This mechanical stress, combined with UV degradation during summer and the scraping of snow shovels and ice, means that untreated deck boards may show significant deterioration within 8 to 12 years. Regular staining every 2 to 3 years with a quality semi-transparent stain can push that number closer to 18 to 20 years by limiting moisture absorption and UV damage.

The type of pressure-treated lumber also matters. Lumber treated with micronized copper azole, which is the standard at New Brunswick building supply retailers like Kent and Home Hardware, carries a limited warranty that typically ranges from 15 years for above-ground use to lifetime for ground-contact-rated material. However, these warranties cover only rot and insect damage, not the checking, warping, and greying that are purely cosmetic but affect how the deck looks and feels underfoot.

Geographic location within the province influences lifespan as well. A deck in Saint John or St. Andrews that faces the Bay of Fundy will experience more salt spray and fog than one in an inland community like Woodstock or Hartland, and that salt exposure accelerates corrosion of fasteners and hardware even as it contributes to surface weathering of the wood. Homeowners in coastal areas should budget for more frequent hardware inspections and consider upgrading to stainless steel screws and joist hangers.

To maximize the lifespan of a pressure-treated deck in this province, the most impactful steps are keeping the surface stained and sealed on a regular schedule, ensuring the substructure has adequate ventilation, clearing snow promptly to reduce prolonged moisture contact, and inspecting all connections and flashing each spring after the thaw. Homeowners who follow this routine consistently report getting 25 years or more from their deck framing with one full re-decking of the surface boards around the 15-year mark.

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Q5

How do I prevent deck joist rot in New Brunswick's Maritime humidity?

The single most effective way to prevent deck joist rot in New Brunswick is to use ground-contact-rated pressure-treated lumber (UC4A minimum) combined with proper ventilation, flashing tape on joist tops, and adequate ground clearance beneath the structure. Maritime humidity in the province regularly pushes relative humidity above 80 percent during summer months, and the combination of fog, coastal moisture, and trapped condensation beneath deck boards creates a persistent wet environment that accelerates wood decay if the framing is not properly protected.

Joist rot in New Brunswick typically begins where moisture sits longest, which is along the top edge of each joist where deck boards trap rainwater and snowmelt against the wood. Installing self-adhesive butyl flashing tape such as Vycor Deck Protector or G-Tape along the top of every joist before fastening the decking creates a waterproof barrier at this critical contact point. This $150-300 investment on a typical 200-square-foot deck can add a decade or more to your joist life. Many New Brunswick deck builders now consider joist tape a standard practice rather than an upgrade, and it is strongly recommended for any home within 30 kilometres of the Bay of Fundy or the Northumberland Strait where salt air compounds the moisture problem.

Ventilation beneath the deck is equally important. The underside of a deck needs consistent airflow to dry out joists after rain and to prevent condensation from settling. A minimum of 18 inches of clearance between the ground and the bottom of the joists is recommended, though 24 inches is preferred. If your yard grade does not allow that clearance, consider installing a vapour barrier of 6-mil polyethylene over the ground beneath the deck, overlapped by 12 inches at the seams and weighted with gravel. This prevents ground moisture from rising into the joist space. In places like Shediac, Bathurst, or Miramichi where the water table can be high, this ground cover makes a measurable difference.

The connection point where joists meet the ledger board against the house is another notorious rot zone. Proper ledger flashing with galvanized or aluminum Z-flashing tucked under the house siding and extending over the top of the ledger board prevents water from wicking into the wood-to-wood joint. Use stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized hardware at all connections, because the salt content in Maritime air will corrode standard zinc-plated joist hangers within a few years.

For additional protection, some New Brunswick homeowners apply a brush-on wood preservative like Copper Green or Tenino Copper Naphthenate to the end-grain cuts of joists and to any notched areas. End grain absorbs moisture at roughly ten times the rate of face grain, so sealing these exposed cuts is a simple but effective step. Annual inspection is also critical. Each spring after the snow clears, walk beneath the deck and probe the joists with an awl or screwdriver, particularly at the ledger connection and at any point where joists bear on beams. Soft, punky wood that the tool sinks into easily indicates rot that needs immediate sistering or replacement before structural failure occurs. Catching decay early in New Brunswick's climate is the difference between a $200 joist repair and a $5,000 partial rebuild.

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Q6

Can I sand down and refinish a weathered pressure-treated deck in Oromocto?

Yes, you can sand and refinish a weathered pressure-treated deck in Oromocto, and it is one of the most effective ways to restore an older deck's appearance without replacing any lumber. Pressure-treated wood that has gone grey and rough from years of exposure to Oromocto's weather responds remarkably well to sanding, and the process reveals the fresh wood beneath the weathered surface layer that is ready to accept stain for a near-new appearance.

The sanding process requires two grits and some patience. Start with 60 to 80 grit sandpaper to remove the grey, weathered surface layer and smooth out any raised grain, splinters, or fuzzy fibres. This coarse grit does the heavy lifting, cutting through the damaged surface and exposing sound wood beneath. Follow immediately with 100 grit to smooth the surface and prepare it for stain. Do not skip the second pass or jump to a finer grit than 100 — pressure-treated softwood that is sanded too smooth will not absorb stain properly, leading to a blotchy, uneven finish that peels within a year.

For the equipment, a random orbital sander works well for individual boards, but for a full deck surface, a belt sander mounted on a pole is far more efficient. You can rent these from equipment suppliers in the Fredericton-Oromocto area. Sand with the wood grain, never across it, and keep the sander moving to avoid creating divots or low spots. Pay attention to the areas around fastener heads and along board edges where weathering tends to be most severe.

Before you start sanding, walk the deck and set any popped screw heads flush with or slightly below the surface. A screw head sitting proud will tear your sandpaper and leave an unsanded ring around it. Also check for any nails and set them below the surface with a nail punch. If the deck has previously been stained with a film-forming finish that is peeling, a chemical deck stripper applied before sanding can help break down the old finish and reduce the work considerably.

Once sanding is complete, clean the entire deck surface thoroughly. A leaf blower followed by a damp mop removes the fine sanding dust that will otherwise prevent stain adhesion. In Oromocto's climate, with its river valley humidity, give the deck at least 48 hours of dry weather after cleaning before staining.

For the finish coat, a penetrating semi-transparent stain is the best choice for pressure-treated lumber in the Oromocto area. Penetrating stains soak into the wood rather than forming a surface film, which means they wear gradually and evenly rather than peeling and flaking. Semi-transparent formulas allow the wood grain to show through while providing UV protection and water repellency. Choose a product with mildewcide included, as the humidity in the area promotes mould growth on deck surfaces through the summer months.

Apply the stain with a brush, roller, or pump sprayer, working in manageable sections and maintaining a wet edge to avoid lap marks. Two thin coats are better than one thick coat. Allow the first coat to penetrate for the time

specified on the product label, typically 15 to 30 minutes, then wipe off any excess that has not absorbed before applying the second coat. Stain that puddles on the surface will dry as a sticky film that peels.

One important note specific to pressure-treated lumber: if the deck is relatively new, meaning within its first year or two, the wood may still contain high moisture levels from the treatment process. Stain will not absorb properly into wet wood. Sprinkle a few drops of water on the surface — if the water beads up, the wood is not ready. If it soaks in within 10 seconds, the wood is dry enough to accept stain. Most decks in Oromocto that have weathered to grey are well past this point and ready to sand and finish immediately.

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Q7

How do I repair frost-heaved deck footings in Fredericton NB?

Repairing frost-heaved deck footings in Fredericton requires excavating the existing footings and extending them to a depth of 1.2 to 1.5 metres below grade, or replacing them entirely with helical piles that anchor below the frost line. Frost heave is one of the most destructive forces acting on deck structures in the Fredericton area, where winter temperatures routinely drop well below minus 20 degrees Celsius and frost penetrates deep into the clay-heavy soils common throughout the Saint John River valley.

Frost heave occurs when moisture in the soil freezes and expands, pushing anything above it upward. A deck footing that does not extend below the frost line will be lifted every winter and may not settle back to its original position in spring. Over several seasons, this progressive movement tilts posts, opens gaps between the deck and the house, stresses joist hangers and beam connections, and can make the entire structure unsafe. If you have noticed your deck sitting higher on one side after winter or new gaps appearing at the ledger board, frost heave is the likely culprit.

The permanent solution depends on what type of footings your deck currently has. Many older decks in Fredericton were built on precast concrete pads or sono tube footings poured to a depth of only 600 to 900 millimetres, which is insufficient for the frost depth in the region. The proper repair involves excavating around each affected footing, removing the inadequate footing, and pouring a new one that extends to at least 1.2 metres and preferably 1.5 metres below the finished grade. The footing should be a minimum of 250 millimetres in diameter if using a sono tube, with a bell-shaped base of about 400 millimetres to distribute the load. Rebar reinforcement within the tube provides tensile strength, and a galvanized post bracket set into the wet concrete at the top provides a positive connection to the post above.

Helical piles are an excellent alternative for the Fredericton area. A helical pile is a steel shaft with helical flights welded to it, driven into the ground using hydraulic equipment until it reaches bearing soil well below the frost line. The pile is cut to grade level and fitted with a cap that accepts the deck post. Helical piles do not require extensive excavation, are unaffected by the high water table in many riverside neighbourhoods, and provide a quantifiable bearing capacity based on installation torque. They are particularly well suited for repairs because they can be installed in tight spaces under an existing deck without dismantling the structure above.

The repair process, whether extending conventional footings or installing helical piles, requires temporarily supporting the deck above. Use adjustable screw jacks or shoring posts to take the load off the post sitting on the heaved footing. Level the deck carefully using a long spirit level across the frame, then make the footing repair and reconnect the post to the new bearing point. If the heave has caused the post itself to shift or the beam connection above to loosen, address those issues simultaneously.

In Fredericton's soil conditions, which include significant clay content in many neighbourhoods along the river and in areas like Hanwell and New Maryland, proper drainage around footings is critical. Clay holds moisture, and moisture drives frost heave. When excavating for new footings, backfill around the tube with clear gravel rather than native clay soil, allowing water to drain away from the footing. A 150-millimetre bed of compacted gravel beneath the footing base also improves drainage and provides a stable bearing surface.

Structural footing repairs in New Brunswick typically fall in the $2,000 to $5,000 range depending on the number of footings involved and whether conventional excavation or helical piles are used. Given that footing failure will progressively damage every other component of the deck, this is a repair that should not be deferred.

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Q8

What maintenance does a composite deck need in New Brunswick?

Composite decking in New Brunswick requires cleaning at least twice per year, occasional mould treatment in humid conditions, and periodic hardware inspection, but it does not need sanding, staining, or sealing. This reduced maintenance profile is one of the primary reasons homeowners across the province choose composite over pressure-treated lumber, but "low maintenance" does not mean "no maintenance," and New Brunswick's maritime climate presents specific challenges that composite deck owners need to address proactively.

The twice-yearly cleaning schedule should align with the seasons that bookend winter. The first cleaning in late May, after the spring thaw and pollen season have passed, removes the accumulated winter grime, road salt residue, and organic matter that builds up under snow cover. The second cleaning in early October, before the leaves have fully dropped, clears the deck surface of the summer's buildup and prevents organic debris from sitting under snow all winter. For both cleanings, use a composite deck cleaner mixed according to the manufacturer's

instructions, apply it with a soft-bristle brush or a push broom, and rinse with a garden hose. Power washing composite decking is generally acceptable but keep the pressure below 1500 PSI and use a fan-tip nozzle at least 20 centimetres from the surface. Never use a zero-degree nozzle on composite material as it can permanently scar the surface.

Mould is the most persistent maintenance challenge for composite decks in New Brunswick. Despite manufacturer claims of mould resistance, the reality is that the province's humidity, frequent rain, and cool temperatures create conditions where mould will grow on the surface of composite boards, particularly on north-facing decks and in shaded areas. The mould grows on the surface film of dirt and organic matter rather than penetrating the material itself, which is a meaningful difference from wood mould, but it is still unsightly and can make the surface slippery. When mould appears, clean it with an oxygen bleach solution, the same sodium percarbonate product used on wood decks. Apply, let it dwell for 10 minutes, scrub with a soft brush, and rinse thoroughly. Avoid chlorine bleach as it can discolour some composite products.

What composite decking does not need is equally important to understand. You should never sand composite boards. Sanding removes the protective outer cap or shell that most modern composite products feature, exposing the wood-fibre core to moisture absorption and dramatically accelerating deterioration. You should never stain or paint composite decking. The material is manufactured with integral colour and is not designed to accept topical finishes. Attempting to stain it will result in an uneven, peeling mess within a season. You should never seal composite decking either, as it does not absorb moisture the way wood does and a sealant film on the surface will trap dirt and create a hazy appearance.

However, composite boards are only the surface layer. The substructure of a composite deck in New Brunswick is almost always pressure-treated lumber, and that framing requires the same inspection and maintenance as any wood deck frame. Check the joists annually for signs of rot, particularly at connections and where they meet the ledger board. Inspect all metal hardware for corrosion. Check that the ledger board attachment to the house is sound and that the flashing is intact. The hidden fastener clips used on many grooved composite boards should be checked for any that have worked loose, which is less common than screw popping in traditional decking but still occurs after years of thermal cycling.

Keep the gaps between composite boards clear of debris. These gaps are engineered for drainage, and when they fill with leaf matter and dirt, water pools on the surface and flows toward the house instead of draining through. A putty knife or specialized gap-cleaning tool run between the boards during each cleaning session keeps drainage functioning properly.

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Q9

How do I fix popped screws on my deck in Riverview NB?

The correct fix for popped screws on a Riverview deck is to drive new, longer screws beside the old ones rather than trying to reset the original fasteners into the same holes. Screw popping is one of the most common deck maintenance issues in New Brunswick, driven directly by the province's aggressive freeze-thaw cycles. Riverview, sitting along the Petitcodiac River with its damp river valley climate, experiences these cycles intensely throughout the winter months, and the repeated expansion and contraction of the wood gradually backs fasteners out of their holes.

The mechanism behind screw popping is straightforward. When moisture in the deck lumber freezes, the wood expands. When it thaws, the wood contracts. Each cycle applies a small upward force on the screw shaft, and over dozens of cycles in a single New Brunswick winter, the screw works its way up millimetre by millimetre until the head is proud of the surface. Stepping on a popped screw head is a genuine injury risk, so this is a repair worth addressing promptly each spring.

To fix a popped screw, do not simply drive it back down into the same hole. The wood fibres around the original hole have been compressed and torn by the popping action, and the screw will have significantly reduced holding power in that degraded material. Instead, remove the popped screw completely using a drill with the appropriate driver bit. If the screw head is stripped or corroded, you may need locking pliers to back it out. Once removed, drive a new screw approximately 25 to 50 millimetres away from the old hole, making sure you are still hitting the joist below. The new screw should be longer than the original — if the original was a 65-millimetre deck screw, use a 75-millimetre replacement. The extra length provides more thread engagement in the joist, which resists future popping.

For the new fastener, choose a coated deck screw specifically designed for pressure-treated lumber. Standard zinc-plated screws corrode rapidly when in contact with the copper-based preservatives in modern pressure-treated

wood, and corroded screws lose their holding power much faster. Look for screws labelled as ACQ-compatible or rated for treated lumber. A number 10 gauge screw with a star or Torx drive head is preferable to a Phillips head because it provides better torque transfer and is less prone to stripping during installation.

When driving the new screw, pre-drill a pilot hole through the deck board if the lumber is old and dry. Seasoned pressure-treated lumber that has been in place for several years becomes surprisingly hard, and driving a screw without a pilot hole can split the board, especially near the ends. The pilot hole should be slightly smaller than the screw shaft diameter. Drive the screw until the head sits flush with the deck surface or very slightly below, but do not over-drive it. A screw head sunk too deep creates a pocket that collects water and accelerates rot around the fastener.

After fixing the popped screws, fill the old screw holes with an exterior wood filler or a small dab of polyurethane caulk to prevent water from channelling into the joist below. This small step makes a real difference in preventing moisture damage at those connection points.

If screws are popping across the entire deck rather than just in isolated spots, it may indicate that the original fasteners were too short, the wrong type, or that the lumber was installed at a very high moisture content and has since shrunk significantly. In that case, a systematic re-fastening of the entire deck surface with proper longer screws is worthwhile. This is still a minor repair in the $500 to $2,000 range and far less expensive than dealing with the board and joist damage that chronically loose fasteners cause over time.

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Q10

When should I replace my deck instead of repairing it in Moncton NB?

You should replace rather than repair your deck in Moncton when more than 50 percent of the deck boards need replacing, multiple structural members are compromised, or the footings are experiencing persistent frost heave that cannot be corrected. The decision between repair and replacement is ultimately a cost-and-safety calculation, and in the Moncton area, where the maritime climate and freeze-thaw cycles are particularly demanding on outdoor wood structures, there are clear thresholds where continued patching stops making financial sense.

Pressure-treated lumber, which is by far the most common decking material in the Greater Moncton area including Dieppe and Riverview, has a typical lifespan of 15 to 25 years in New Brunswick's climate. Where your deck falls within that range depends heavily on how well it has been maintained. A deck that has been cleaned annually, stained or sealed every two to three years, and kept clear of debris and standing water can reasonably reach the 25-year mark with only minor board replacements along the way. A neglected deck, particularly one that was never sealed after construction, may show serious deterioration by year 12 to 15.

The structural inspection is where the real decision gets made. Surface boards are relatively inexpensive and easy to swap, so even if every board on the walking surface needs replacing, that alone is not necessarily a reason to tear down the whole structure. The critical question is what is happening underneath. Get below the deck and examine the joists, beams, ledger board, posts, and footings. Use a screwdriver to probe for soft rot at every connection point. Check that posts are plumb, beams are level, and the ledger board is firmly attached to the house with no signs of water infiltration behind it.

If you find rot in two or more beams, widespread joist deterioration, or a ledger board that is pulling away from the house framing, you are looking at a structural overhaul that may cost nearly as much as building new. At that point, replacement is the better investment because you get a completely fresh structure with modern hardware, proper footing depth, current code compliance, and a full new lifespan ahead of it. The Moncton area has seen building code updates over the past two decades that significantly improved deck safety standards, and an older deck may not meet current requirements for railing height, baluster spacing, beam-to-post connections, or lateral bracing.

Persistent frost heave is another strong indicator for replacement in the Moncton area. If your footings are heaving every winter and your deck is shifting, tilting, or developing new gaps at the house connection each spring, the foundation system is inadequate for the frost depth. Repairing surface issues on a deck with moving footings is futile because the movement will continue to stress every joint and fastener. A replacement deck can be built on proper footings extending 1.2 to 1.5 metres below grade, or on helical piles that anchor below the frost line permanently.

There are also practical considerations beyond pure structural assessment. If your deck is an awkward size, has a layout that does not serve your household well, or sits at a height that no longer meets code for the stair and railing configuration, a replacement gives you the opportunity to redesign. Many homeowners in the Moncton area find that their original builder-grade deck was undersized, and the replacement project becomes a chance to add usable square footage.

As a rough cost framework, minor deck repairs in New Brunswick run $500 to $2,000, while structural repairs climb to $2,000 to $5,000. When structural repair estimates start approaching 40 to 50 percent of the cost of a new deck, replacement is almost always the more sensible path because you receive a structure with a full 15-to-25-year lifespan ahead rather than a patched structure with uncertain remaining years.

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Q11

What is the best way to remove mould from a deck in New Brunswick's humid climate?

The most effective method for removing mould from a New Brunswick deck is an oxygen bleach treatment using sodium percarbonate followed by a power wash at 1500 PSI. This two-step approach kills the mould at its root structure, lifts the staining from the wood fibres, and does so without the environmental damage or wood degradation that chlorine bleach causes. Given that maritime humidity is the primary driver of deck mould throughout the province, understanding why it forms and how to prevent its return is just as important as the removal itself.

New Brunswick's climate creates near-perfect conditions for mould growth on wood decks. The province averages over 1100 millimetres of annual precipitation, summer humidity regularly sits above 70 percent, and the cool

overnight temperatures in river valleys around Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John create morning dew that keeps deck surfaces damp well into the day. North-facing decks are especially vulnerable because they receive limited direct sunlight to dry the surface, and decks surrounded by trees or close to the ground with poor air circulation underneath are almost guaranteed to develop mould within a season or two of being built.

To begin the removal process, sweep the deck clear of all loose debris, leaves, and pine needles. Mix the sodium percarbonate oxygen bleach according to the manufacturer's directions, typically about 250 grams per 4 litres of warm water. Apply the solution generously across the deck surface using a pump sprayer or watering can, making sure to saturate any areas with visible black or green mould growth. Let the solution sit for 10 to 15 minutes. You will see it fizzing slightly as the oxygen release breaks apart the mould structure. Do not let it dry on the surface — if it is a warm day, mist the area with plain water to keep it damp during the dwell time.

After the dwell period, power wash the entire deck at 1500 PSI using a 25- or 40-degree fan tip nozzle. Work with the wood grain in smooth, overlapping passes, keeping the nozzle about 15 to 20 centimetres from the surface. The combination of the oxygen bleach pre-treatment and the mechanical action of the washer will remove mould that has penetrated into the wood surface. For deeply embedded black mould stains, a second application of oxygen bleach followed by scrubbing with a stiff-bristle brush before the final wash may be necessary.

Once the deck is clean, allow it to dry completely for 48 to 72 hours before applying any protective finish. This drying period is critical in New Brunswick's climate because sealing in residual moisture creates the exact conditions that led to the mould in the first place. When the deck is dry, apply a penetrating deck stain or sealant that contains mildewcide. Semi-transparent stains offer a good balance of protection and appearance, and products specifically marketed for maritime or coastal climates tend to include higher concentrations of mould inhibitors.

Preventing Recurrence

Prevention in New Brunswick's humid climate requires ongoing effort. Keep the deck surface clear of leaves and organic debris that trap moisture. Trim back any overhanging branches to maximize sunlight exposure and airflow. Ensure the gap between the ground and the underside of the deck is sufficient for air circulation — at least 300 millimetres is ideal. Clean the deck twice per year, once in spring after snowmelt and once in early fall before leaf drop, even if mould is not yet visible. These lighter cleanings can be done with a garden hose and oxygen bleach solution without the power washer. On north-facing decks, a mid-summer cleaning may also be warranted. Consistent maintenance is the only reliable defence against mould in this climate.

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Q12

How do I repair a sagging beam under my deck in Bathurst NB?

Repairing a sagging beam under a deck in Bathurst requires identifying the cause of the sag, then either adding a support post beneath the beam or sistering a new beam alongside the existing one, depending on the severity. A sagging beam is a structural concern that affects the safety of the entire deck, and Bathurst's northern New Brunswick climate, with its heavy snow loads and deep frost penetration, puts particular stress on deck substructures.

Before you begin any repair, determine why the beam is sagging. The three most common causes in the Bathurst area are rot at the beam-to-post connection, undersized lumber that has gradually deflected under load, and frost heave that has shifted a supporting post out of position. Get under the deck with a flashlight and a screwdriver and examine the beam carefully. Press the screwdriver into the wood at every point where the beam sits on a post or where hardware connects. If the screwdriver sinks easily, you have rot, and the repair approach changes. Also check whether the supporting posts are still plumb and firmly seated on their footings.

If the beam itself is structurally sound but has deflected over the span between posts, the most straightforward fix is adding an intermediate support post. This involves pouring a new footing at the midpoint of the sag, then installing a pressure-treated 6x6 post with an adjustable post cap on top and a post base bracket at the bottom. Before setting the post, use a hydraulic bottle jack placed on a solid footing to carefully lift the beam back to level. Raise it slowly, no more than 3 millimetres at a time, checking that the deck surface above is returning to a flat plane. Once level, cut and install the new post, making sure it bears fully on the beam above and the footing below.

For beams where rot has compromised the wood but the damage is limited to one face or the area around the post connection, sistering is the preferred repair. This means bolting a new beam of equal or greater dimension alongside the existing one. Use pressure-treated lumber rated for ground contact, and through-bolt the new beam to the old one with 12-millimetre galvanized carriage bolts spaced every 400 millimetres along the length. The new

sister beam takes over the structural load while the old beam provides additional rigidity. Before sistering, jack the beam back to level using the same gradual approach described above.

In Bathurst, where frost penetrates to significant depth during winter, pay special attention to the footing situation. If the sag is caused by a frost-heaved footing, the beam repair alone will not solve the problem. The footing needs to extend below the frost line, which in the Bathurst area means a minimum depth of 1.2 to 1.5 metres. If existing footings are shallower, consider installing helical piles as replacements. Helical piles are screwed into the ground below the frost line and provide a stable, permanent bearing point unaffected by freeze-thaw movement.

If the beam rot is extensive, meaning the wood is soft across more than half its cross-section over a significant length, the beam needs full replacement rather than sistering. This requires temporarily supporting the joists above with shoring posts while the old beam is removed and a new one installed. Structural beam repair in New Brunswick typically costs between $2,000 and $5,000 depending on the scope, and given the safety implications, this is one area where hiring an experienced deck contractor is strongly recommended.

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Q13

How do I fix a wobbly deck railing in Dieppe NB?

A wobbly deck railing in Dieppe is almost always caused by loose post connections at the deck frame, and the fix involves reinforcing those connections with proper structural hardware. Railing posts are the most stress-tested component of any deck, absorbing lateral force every time someone leans against the railing, and New Brunswick's freeze-thaw cycles gradually work fasteners loose over the years. A railing that wobbles is not just an annoyance — it is a safety issue that the National Building Code of Canada takes seriously, requiring deck railings to withstand a lateral load of at least 0.75 kilonewtons per metre.

The first step is identifying exactly where the movement originates. Grab the railing at the top and push it firmly outward while watching the base of each post. In most cases, you will see the post shifting at the point where it connects to the rim joist or deck frame. This is the connection that needs attention. If the post itself is rotten or cracked, it needs full replacement, but more often the post is fine and the fasteners have simply loosened.

For posts that are bolted through the rim joist, which is the most common attachment method on decks in the Dieppe and Moncton area, check whether the bolts have loosened. Over time, especially with New Brunswick's moisture cycles, the wood around bolt holes compresses and shrinks, creating slack. Start by tightening the existing bolts with a socket wrench. If the bolts spin without tightening, the hole has enlarged too much and you will need to drill a new bolt hole offset from the original, using a 12-millimetre carriage bolt with a washer and nut on the inside.

A more robust solution, and one that is becoming standard practice, is to install structural post-mounting hardware. Simpson Strong-Tie and similar manufacturers make post-to-rim-joist brackets that distribute the load across a much larger area than simple through-bolts. These brackets are surface-mounted to the inside face of the rim joist with multiple structural screws and accept a standard 4x4 or 6x6 post. Retrofitting these brackets on an existing deck in Dieppe is straightforward and typically takes about 30 minutes per post.

If the wobble is in the railing sections between posts rather than at the post base, the issue is usually failed fasteners at the joints between the top rail, bottom rail, and balusters. Screws driven into end grain have poor holding power and tend to pull out over the years. The fix here is to add a structural screw driven at an angle through the rail and into the post, or better yet, to use a connector bolt that passes through both pieces and cinches tight with a nut. For top rails, adding a continuous 2x4 or 2x6 cap rail that spans across the top of each post and is screwed down into the post tops provides significant stiffening to the entire railing assembly.

While you are working on the railing, check the post bases for any signs of rot where they contact the deck surface. In Dieppe's humid climate, water pools at these junctions and rot can develop without being visible. A few taps with a hammer will reveal soft wood. If rot is present at the base, cut the post above the damaged section and use a post base bracket to create a new, dry connection.

This type of railing repair in New Brunswick typically falls in the $500 to $2,000 range if you hire a contractor, depending on how many posts need attention and whether any full post replacements are necessary. It is a worthwhile investment given the safety implications.

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Q14

Can I replace individual deck boards on a 15-year-old deck in Saint John?

Yes, you can absolutely replace individual deck boards on a 15-year-old deck in Saint John, and in most cases this is the smartest and most cost-effective approach. At the 15-year mark, a pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick is roughly at its midlife point, since well-maintained PT lumber lasts 15 to 25 years in the province's maritime climate. If the substructure — joists, beams, posts, and ledger board — is still sound, swapping out damaged or deteriorated surface boards is a straightforward repair that can buy you another decade of solid use.

Start by inspecting the boards you plan to keep. Press a flathead screwdriver into the wood at several points, especially near fastener holes and where boards sit on joists. If the screwdriver sinks more than 6 millimetres with moderate pressure, that board has soft rot and should be added to the replacement list. Also look for boards with significant cupping, where the edges have curled upward creating a trough shape, or boards with splits longer than a third of their length. In Saint John, the salt air from the Bay of Fundy accelerates weathering compared to inland communities, so you may find more surface degradation than you would on a similar-age deck in, say, Fredericton.

While you have boards removed, this is your best opportunity to inspect the joists underneath. Check every joist-to-beam connection and look carefully where joists meet the ledger board against your house. Rot at these connection points is common in the Saint John climate and is the real structural concern on an older deck. If you find soft or spongy joists, you have options: a joist with minor surface rot can be reinforced by sistering a new joist alongside it,

bolted through with carriage bolts. A joist with deep rot needs full replacement.

When selecting replacement boards, match the dimensions of your existing lumber. Most decks built 15 years ago in the Saint John area used 5/4 by 6 inch pressure-treated decking. Current PT lumber from local suppliers will be slightly different in moisture content than your seasoned existing boards, so the new boards may shrink slightly over the first season. Leave a small gap of about 3 millimetres between the new board and its neighbours to account for this, and fasten with coated deck screws that are at least 75 millimetres long to ensure solid bite into the joists.

One practical consideration is colour matching. New pressure-treated lumber has a greenish tint that will not match your weathered grey boards. You have two options: replace the boards and let them weather naturally over 6 to 12 months until the colour evens out, or take this opportunity to sand and stain the entire deck surface for a uniform appearance. If you go the staining route, the new boards need to dry for several weeks before accepting stain properly.

Cost-wise, replacing individual boards on a deck in New Brunswick typically falls in the $500 to $2,000 range for minor repairs, depending on how many boards you are swapping and whether you are doing the work yourself or hiring it out. This is a fraction of a full deck replacement, which makes selective board replacement the clear winner when the underlying structure is still in good condition. The general guideline for when replacement makes more sense than repair is when more than 50 percent of the deck boards need replacing and you are finding structural issues in multiple beams or joists simultaneously.

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Q15

How often should I power wash my wood deck in Fredericton NB?

You should power wash a wood deck in Fredericton once a year, ideally in late May or early June after the spring thaw and before summer entertaining season. New Brunswick's climate, with its heavy snowfall, spring runoff, and persistent maritime humidity, deposits a significant amount of dirt, mildew, and organic debris on deck surfaces over the winter months. An annual cleaning keeps the wood healthy, extends the life of any stain or sealant, and prevents the kind of deep-set grime that leads to premature rot.

When power washing pressure-treated lumber, which is the most common decking material in the Fredericton area, keep the pressure at or below 1500 PSI. Higher settings may seem tempting when tackling stubborn green or black staining, but anything above 1500 PSI can gouge the softwood fibres of spruce or pine, leaving furry raised grain that splinters underfoot and actually traps more moisture going forward. Use a fan-tip nozzle rather than a zero-degree tip, hold it roughly 15 to 20 centimetres from the surface, and work with the grain in long, even strokes. Overlapping passes prevents the striped appearance that comes from inconsistent cleaning.

Before you start the washer, sweep the deck thoroughly and clear debris from between boards. If you notice green or black mould patches, which are extremely common on north-facing decks in New Brunswick due to the persistent humidity, pre-treat those areas with an oxygen bleach solution made from sodium percarbonate mixed with warm water. Let that solution sit for 10 to 15 minutes before washing. Oxygen bleach is gentler on the wood and surrounding landscaping than chlorine-based cleaners, and it does a far better job breaking down the organic mould structure rather than simply bleaching the colour.

After washing, allow the deck to dry for at least 48 to 72 hours before applying any stain or sealant. In Fredericton's spring weather, with cool nights and morning dew, this drying period is important because trapped moisture under a fresh coat of stain will cause peeling and flaking within a single season. A moisture meter reading below 15 percent is the target before any finish goes on.

If your deck is in a particularly shaded spot or close to the Saint John River valley where fog and humidity settle, you may benefit from a light mid-season rinse in September using just a garden hose and a stiff bristle brush. This is not a full power wash but more of a maintenance sweep to knock back any mould growth before it sets in over the long winter. Decks that receive full sun exposure in areas like the south side of Fredericton's subdivisions generally do fine with the single annual wash.

For cedar decks, which are less common in the region but still present, reduce pressure to 1000 to 1200 PSI. Cedar is a softer wood and more prone to surface damage from aggressive washing. The same oxygen bleach pre-treatment works well on cedar, and the annual schedule still applies.

Over the life of a pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick, which typically spans 15 to 25 years depending on maintenance, consistent annual power washing combined with stain or sealant every two to three years is the single most effective way to push the deck toward the upper end of that lifespan rather than the lower end.

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Q16

What causes deck boards to warp in New Brunswick and how do I prevent it?

Deck boards warp in New Brunswick primarily because of uneven moisture absorption and loss across the board's thickness, combined with the province's extreme seasonal swings in temperature and humidity. When one face of a board dries faster than the other, the drier side shrinks while the wetter side stays expanded, creating the curved or twisted shape that characterizes warping. New Brunswick's climate, with its cold dry winters and hot humid summers, creates the perfect conditions for this cycle to repeat year after year.

There are several specific types of warping you will see on New Brunswick decks. Cupping is when the board edges curl upward while the centre drops, forming a trough shape. This happens when the top face of the board dries out in the sun and wind while the bottom face stays damp from trapped moisture underneath. Crowning is the opposite, where the centre pushes up, and it often occurs when boards are installed with the bark side up and the growth rings cause the wood to curve as it dries. Twisting happens when one corner of the board lifts off the joist while the diagonally opposite corner stays down, and this is most common in boards cut from near the centre of the log where the grain is less stable.

Preventing warping starts with material selection. Choose pressure-treated boards that are as straight and dry as possible at the time of purchase. Kiln-dried after treatment lumber, often stamped KDAT, has significantly lower moisture content than standard wet pressure-treated wood and is much less prone to warping as it acclimates. If you are buying standard pressure-treated lumber, which is more commonly available at New Brunswick building supply yards, let it acclimate on site for a week or two before installation. Stack the boards flat with spacer sticks between each layer so air circulates on all sides evenly.

Fastening plays a major role in keeping boards flat over time. Each board should be secured to every joist it crosses with two screws, one near each edge, placed about 3/4 inch from the board edge. This pinches the board down at regular intervals and resists the curling forces that cause cupping. Use screws rather than nails because screws maintain their holding power as the wood cycles through wet and dry seasons. Nails can work loose over time, and once a board is no longer firmly held to the joist, it is free to move and warp.

Underneath the deck, ventilation is critical. If the ground below your deck is covered or enclosed, moisture gets trapped and keeps the bottom face of every board damp while the top face bakes in the sun. This is the textbook recipe for cupping. Ensure at least 18 inches of clearance between the ground and the bottom of the joists, and leave the area open to airflow on at least two sides. In situations where the deck is low to the ground, laying landscape fabric and a layer of gravel beneath the deck helps reduce moisture evaporation from the soil.

Joist tape is another preventive measure that also reduces warping indirectly. Products like Trex RainEscape or G-Tape applied to the top of each joist create a waterproof barrier that prevents moisture from wicking up through the

joist-to-board contact point. This keeps the underside of the board drier at those critical attachment points and reduces the moisture differential that drives cupping.

Ongoing maintenance also matters. Power wash your deck once or twice a year at 1,500 to 2,000 PSI using a fan tip held at least 12 inches from the surface to remove dirt, mildew, and organic debris that hold moisture against the wood. After washing and drying, apply a quality penetrating deck stain or sealant. This slows moisture absorption into the top face and helps equalize the drying rate between the two sides of the board.

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Q17

How do I fix a rotting deck board without replacing the entire deck in Moncton?

Individual rotting deck boards can absolutely be replaced without tearing out the entire deck, provided the underlying joists and structural framing are still sound. This is one of the most common and cost-effective deck repairs in the Moncton area, and it is well within the ability of a handy homeowner to complete in a weekend.

Before you pull out a single board, you need to assess what is happening underneath. Remove the rotting board or boards and inspect the joists they were sitting on. Press a screwdriver or awl into the top surface and sides of each joist. Sound wood will resist penetration. If the screwdriver sinks in easily, the joist has rot and you have a bigger problem that needs to be addressed first. Joist rot prevention should always be part of any deck repair project. Apply joist tape such as Trex RainEscape or G-Tape to the top of each exposed joist before installing new boards. This self-adhesive membrane prevents water from pooling on the joist surface, which is the primary cause of joist deterioration. Make sure there is adequate ventilation underneath the deck as well, since trapped moisture accelerates rot in Moncton's humid summer climate.

To replace the rotting boards, start by removing the screws or nails holding them to the joists. If the boards are badly deteriorated, they may break apart as you remove them, which is fine. Use a pry bar to lift out any remaining pieces and pull all old fasteners from the joists. Measure the length of the boards you are removing and purchase replacement boards of the same width, thickness, and material. If your existing deck is pressure-treated lumber, match it with new pressure-treated material. The new boards will likely be a lighter colour than the aged surrounding boards, but after a season of weathering and a uniform application of stain or sealant, the colour difference blends significantly.

When installing the replacement boards, use exterior-rated deck screws rather than nails. Screws hold better over time and are easier to remove if you ever need to do future maintenance. Pre-drill the screw holes near the ends of the boards to prevent splitting, especially with pressure-treated lumber that may still be relatively wet from the treatment process. Leave a 1/8-inch gap between the new boards and the adjacent existing boards to allow for drainage and seasonal expansion.

This kind of targeted board replacement falls into the minor repair category, typically costing between $500 and $2,000 depending on how many boards you are swapping out and whether you hire someone or do it yourself. A single board costs $15 to $40 depending on the species, length, and treatment, so the material cost for replacing a dozen boards on a typical Moncton deck is quite manageable.

The bigger question is whether spot repairs make sense for your particular deck, or whether you have crossed the threshold into full replacement territory. A general guideline is that if more than 50 percent of your deck boards are showing signs of rot, or if multiple joists are compromised, or if the footings have heaved repeatedly from frost, you are better off replacing the entire deck rather than continuing to patch it. A pressure-treated deck in the Moncton climate has a realistic lifespan of 15 to 25 years with proper maintenance. If your deck is approaching the 20-year mark and you are replacing boards every year or two, the cumulative repair costs will eventually exceed the cost of building new.

After replacing the boards, power wash the entire deck surface at 1,500 to 2,000 PSI using a fan tip held at least 12 inches from the surface. This cleans the existing boards and prepares everything for a uniform coat of stain or sealant, which will help the new and old boards blend together and protect the whole surface going forward.

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