

NEW BRUNSWICK DECKS

---

# Troubleshooting & Problems

Questions about common deck problems like warping, splitting, mold, heaving, squeaking, and how to fix them.

14 Expert Answers from Deck IQ

[newbrunswickdecks.com/construction-brain](https://newbrunswickdecks.com/construction-brain)

# Table of Contents

---

1. Why is my new deck stain not drying properly in Moncton NB?
2. What causes black spots on my cedar deck in New Brunswick?
3. How do I fix gaps between deck boards that have shrunk in Bathurst NB?
4. Why is my deck railing loose and how do I tighten it in Fredericton NB?
5. How do I stop my deck from shaking when people walk on it in Moncton?
6. What causes white residue on composite decking in New Brunswick?
7. How do I fix squeaky deck boards in Dieppe NB?
8. Why are my deck post bases rotting in Riverview NB?
9. What causes deck stain to peel in New Brunswick's Maritime climate?
10. Why is water pooling on my deck surface in Moncton NB?
11. How do I fix a deck that is pulling away from the house in Saint John NB?
12. Why are my deck boards cupping and how do I fix it in Fredericton?
13. What causes green algae to grow on my deck in New Brunswick?
14. Why is my deck bouncy or springy when I walk on it in Moncton NB?

## Why is my new deck stain not drying properly in Moncton NB?

**Deck stain that remains tacky or wet long after application is almost always caused by one or a combination of three factors: the stain was applied too thickly, the temperature was too low, or the humidity was too high — and Moncton's Maritime climate makes the last two particularly common culprits.**

New Brunswick's coastal proximity creates conditions that can extend stain dry times well beyond what the product label suggests.

Most exterior deck stains require a minimum temperature of 10 degrees Celsius for proper curing, and critically, that temperature needs to hold for at least 48 hours after application. In Moncton, even during the warmer months, nighttime temperatures can drop below this threshold in May, September, and early October. If you stained your deck on a warm afternoon but the temperature fell to 5 or 6 degrees overnight, the curing process stalled and left the stain in a semi-dried, tacky state. This is the single most common reason for stain failure in the Moncton area.

High humidity is the second major factor. Moncton regularly experiences relative humidity above 75 percent, particularly during foggy periods in summer when moisture rolls in from the Petitcodiac River valley and the Bay of Fundy. Stain needs moisture to evaporate from its surface to dry properly, and when the surrounding air is already saturated, that evaporation slows dramatically. Oil-based stains are especially sensitive to humidity, though water-based formulations can also struggle when humidity stays above 80 percent for extended periods.

Over-application is the third common cause and the one that is entirely within your control. When stain is applied too thickly — whether by using too much product per stroke, applying multiple coats before the first has dried, or failing to back-brush after rolling — the surface may skin over while the underneath remains wet. This creates a permanently tacky layer that will not resolve on its own. The temptation to apply a thick coat for richer colour is understandable, but deck stain is designed to penetrate the wood, not sit on top of it. Two thin coats will always outperform one thick coat.

If your stain is still tacky after several days, your options depend on the severity. For mildly tacky stain that is mostly dry, a few days of warm, sunny weather above 15 degrees with low humidity may finish the curing process. For stain that remains genuinely wet or gummy, you will likely need to strip it using a commercial deck stain stripper, allow the wood to dry completely, and re-apply under better conditions.

To avoid this problem in the future, plan your staining projects for a stretch of weather in Moncton where daytime highs are consistently above 20 degrees and nighttime lows stay above 10 degrees, with no rain in the forecast for at least 48 hours. Late June through mid-August typically offers the most reliable windows. Check the forecast not just for the day you plan to stain but for the two to three days following. Apply thin, even coats using a quality brush or stain pad, and always back-brush to work the product into the wood grain. If you are staining a large deck, work

in manageable sections and maintain a wet edge to avoid lap marks that indicate over-application in overlapping areas.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [R.e.j Construction ?](#)
- [Worry No More Handyman Services ?](#)
- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

Q2

## What causes black spots on my cedar deck in New Brunswick?

**Black spots on cedar decking are caused by a chemical reaction between the wood's natural tannins and iron, typically introduced by metal fasteners, railings, or even iron-rich water splashing onto the deck surface.** This is one of the most common aesthetic complaints among cedar deck owners in New Brunswick, and while it looks alarming, it is a surface stain rather than a sign of rot or structural damage.

Cedar is naturally rich in tannins — the same organic compounds that give the wood its beautiful reddish-brown colour and its resistance to insects and decay. When these tannins come into contact with iron, they undergo a chemical reaction that produces iron tannate, a dark blue-black compound. The most frequent source of iron is standard galvanized or bare steel nails and screws. Even galvanized fasteners can expose iron as their zinc coating wears away over time, and in New Brunswick's wet Maritime climate, where annual precipitation exceeds 1,100 millimetres in most regions, that wear happens faster than in drier parts of Canada.

You will often notice the black spots concentrated in rings around each nail or screw head, which is the telltale sign of fastener-related iron staining. However, the discolouration can also spread more broadly if iron-laden water runs across the deck surface. Homes in rural New Brunswick that use well water with high iron content can see widespread black staining after watering plants on or near the deck, or from irrigation overspray.

## Fixing Existing Black Spots

The most effective treatment for iron tannin staining on cedar is an oxalic acid-based wood brightener. Oxalic acid breaks the bond between the iron and tannin compounds, lifting the dark stain from the wood surface. These products are widely available at building supply stores across New Brunswick. Apply the brightener according to the manufacturer's directions, allow it to dwell for the recommended time, then rinse thoroughly with a garden hose. For severe staining, you may need two applications. Avoid using chlorine bleach, as it can damage cedar fibres and strip the wood of its natural colour in an uneven, blotchy pattern.

Once you have removed the existing stains, the key to preventing recurrence is eliminating the iron source. Replace any standard steel or galvanized fasteners with stainless steel screws. Stainless steel does not react with cedar tannins and will not produce black staining regardless of moisture exposure. Yes, stainless steel fasteners cost more — typically two to three times the price of galvanized — but on a cedar deck that already represents a significant investment, the additional cost is modest and eliminates the problem permanently.

If your black spots are not concentrated around fasteners and appear in random splotches, you may be dealing with mould or mildew rather than iron staining. New Brunswick's humid summers create ideal conditions for surface mould on cedar, particularly on north-facing decks or sections shaded by trees. Mould spots tend to be slightly raised and fuzzy when examined closely, while iron stains are flat and embedded in the wood grain. A deck cleaner formulated for mould removal will address this issue, and applying a quality exterior wood stain or sealer after cleaning will help prevent regrowth by reducing moisture absorption into the cedar.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- Larmondin Carpentry ?
- Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?
- Duguay Construction ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

**Q3**

## How do I fix gaps between deck boards that have shrunk in Bathurst NB?

**Gaps between pressure-treated deck boards after installation are completely normal — pressure-treated lumber is saturated with preservative solution at the mill and will shrink as it dries over its first one to two years, with gaps up to 1/4 inch being typical and expected.** In Bathurst and along New Brunswick's north shore, the Maritime climate means this drying process can take longer than in drier regions, but the shrinkage will still occur.

When pressure-treated wood arrives at the lumber yard or job site, its moisture content is often 40 percent or higher. As it acclimatizes to Bathurst's environment over the following 12 to 24 months, it will lose much of that moisture and shrink across the width of each board. A standard 5.5-inch-wide deck board can shrink by 1/8 to 1/4 inch, and if the boards were installed tightly together with no gap — which many builders do intentionally, knowing the wood will shrink — you will end up with noticeable gaps once the drying is complete.

If your gaps are 1/4 inch or less and relatively uniform across the deck, there is nothing to fix. This spacing actually benefits your deck by allowing water to drain through and air to circulate, which reduces the risk of rot and mould growth. Decks in Bathurst face heavy snow loads through winter and significant rainfall in spring and fall, so good drainage between boards is genuinely important for longevity.

If the gaps are excessive — wider than 1/4 inch — or if they are uneven with some boards tight and others widely spaced, the best solution is to re-space the boards. This involves removing the screws from each board, shifting the boards to create even spacing, and re-fastening them. While this is labour-intensive, it produces the best result. You will likely end up with a gap at one edge of the deck where you have redistributed the extra space, which can be filled with an additional narrow board or a trim piece.

For gaps that are moderate but bothersome, there are deck board gap filler products available at building supply stores in the Bathurst area. These are flexible strips or inserts that press into the gaps. However, these are cosmetic solutions that can trap debris and moisture, potentially causing more harm than good in New Brunswick's wet climate. They also tend to pop out over time as the wood continues to expand and contract seasonally.

One approach to avoid entirely is filling gaps with caulk or wood filler. These rigid materials will crack and fail as the wood moves with seasonal moisture changes, creating an ugly mess that is difficult to clean up. Bathurst experiences significant humidity swings between the damp coastal summers and the dry heated winters, so your deck boards will continue to move slightly every year even after the initial shrinkage period is over.

If you are planning a new deck or replacing boards, ask your builder to install the pressure-treated lumber with a 1/8-inch gap between boards. This accounts for the fact that the wood will shrink further, and you will end up with spacing in the 1/4-inch range once drying is complete — the ideal gap for drainage and aesthetics. Some experienced builders in northern New Brunswick will also let pressure-treated lumber acclimate on site for a few weeks before installation, which reduces the amount of post-installation shrinkage.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?](#)
- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)
- [Worry No More Handyman Services ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

## Why is my deck railing loose and how do I tighten it in Fredericton NB?

**Loose deck railings are most commonly caused by fastener fatigue, post-to-frame connection failure, or wood shrinkage at the post base — and in Fredericton's climate, freeze-thaw cycling accelerates all three.**

A wobbly railing is not just an annoyance; it is a safety hazard that needs prompt attention, especially if your deck is more than 24 inches above grade where the New Brunswick Building Code requires railings to withstand a minimum 50-pound-per-foot lateral load.

The first thing to check is the connection between your railing posts and the deck frame. Grab each post at the top and push it firmly side to side. If the post moves at the base, the issue is in the post-to-joist or post-to-rim-board connection. Many older Fredericton decks were built with simple lag screws or carriage bolts connecting the post to the outside of the rim joist, and over the years these fasteners loosen as wood expands and contracts through the region's temperature extremes — Fredericton regularly sees swings from -25 degrees Celsius in January to 30 degrees or higher in July. Each cycle works the bolt hole slightly larger.

For a post bolted to the rim joist, start by tightening the existing bolts with a socket wrench. If the bolt spins freely without tightening, the hole has become oversized and you will need to either install a larger-diameter bolt or drill a new hole in a slightly different position. A better long-term solution is to install a post-mount bracket or a through-bolt system that sandwiches the rim joist between a backing plate and the post mount. These hardware connections distribute the load more evenly and resist loosening far better than a single bolt.

If your posts are notched and sit on top of the deck frame rather than bolting to the side, check for wood rot at the notch. Fredericton gets approximately 1,100 millimetres of precipitation annually, and notched post bases are notorious for trapping water right where structural integrity matters most. If you find soft or spongy wood, the post needs to be replaced entirely — no amount of tightening will restore a rotted connection.

For the railing sections between posts, looseness is usually caused by failed screws or nails at the bracket connections. Remove the old fasteners and replace them with structural screws that are slightly longer and thicker than the originals. If the screw holes are stripped, insert a wooden toothpick or dowel piece with wood glue into the hole before driving the new screw — this gives the threads fresh wood to grip.

### When to Call a Professional

If more than two or three posts are loose, if you see any signs of rot in the structural framing, or if the deck is elevated more than a few feet off the ground, this is a job for an experienced deck builder. Railing failures on raised decks can cause serious injuries. A qualified contractor in the Fredericton area can assess whether the issue is isolated fastener wear or a sign of broader structural deterioration in the framing. They can also ensure any repairs

meet current New Brunswick Building Code requirements, which may have changed since your deck was originally built. Permits are typically not required for railing repair, but they are required if you end up replacing the entire railing system.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- R.e.j Construction ?
- Eastbound Homes ?
- Duguay Construction ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

Q5

## How do I stop my deck from shaking when people walk on it in Moncton?

**A deck that shakes when people walk on it lacks lateral bracing, has undersized joists with excessive spans, or suffers from both conditions simultaneously.** The shaking you feel is different from simple bounciness. Bounce is vertical deflection at mid-span, while shaking involves the entire structure swaying or vibrating side to side, which indicates the frame is not rigid enough to resist lateral forces. In Moncton, where decks must also withstand wind loads off the Petitcodiac River and significant snow loads through winter, a deck that shakes under foot traffic is a structure that needs attention before those heavier loads arrive.

The most common cause of lateral shaking is missing cross-bracing between the posts. A deck is essentially a table, and just like a table with four straight legs and no diagonal supports will wobble, a deck with vertical posts and no diagonal bracing will sway when horizontal forces are applied. Walking creates horizontal force because each footstep pushes backward against the deck surface, transferring a lateral component through the frame. On an elevated deck in Moncton where the posts are 4 to 8 feet tall, even a small lateral force produces noticeable movement at the deck surface because the tall posts act as levers.

To eliminate lateral shaking, install diagonal bracing between the posts and the beam. Cut 2x6 lumber at 45-degree angles and bolt them from the lower portion of each post to the underside of the beam, forming a triangle at each post location. Use 3/8-inch carriage bolts at each connection point rather than screws, as bolted connections resist

the repeated push-pull forces that cause screws to work loose over time. Each brace should be at least 4 feet long to create an effective triangle. Install braces on both sides of corner posts and on at least one side of intermediate posts.

If your deck also bounces vertically, the joists need reinforcement in addition to the lateral bracing. For 2x8 joists spanning more than 10 feet or 2x10 joists spanning more than 13 feet at 16-inch on-centre spacing, the span exceeds the practical limit for residential deck framing in SPF lumber. Adding a mid-span beam supported by new posts on properly sized footings is the definitive fix. This new beam cuts each joist span in half, eliminates the vertical bounce, and provides additional post locations where you can add diagonal bracing to further stiffen the entire structure.

Solid blocking between joists also reduces vibration significantly. Install full-depth blocks cut from the same lumber size as your joists, placed in a staggered line at mid-span and at each third point of the span. Toenail or use structural screws to secure each block tightly between the joists. The blocks force all the joists to deflect together as a unit rather than independently, which distributes the energy of each footstep across a wider area and dramatically reduces the perceptible vibration.

Check your ledger connection as well. A deck that has even slight movement at the ledger will transmit vibration across the entire structure. The ledger should be lag-bolted to the house rim joist with 1/2-inch diameter bolts at 16-inch intervals in a staggered pattern. If you can push against the deck near the house and feel any movement at the ledger, those bolts need to be tightened or replaced with longer ones that achieve full penetration into solid framing.

Finally, inspect the base of each post where it meets the footing. Posts that have shifted on their footings or developed rot at the base cannot provide stable lateral support regardless of what bracing exists above. Any post that can be rocked by hand at ground level needs its base connection repaired or replaced with a proper metal post base anchor before the bracing above it will be effective.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- Worry No More Handyman Services ?
- Larmondin Carpentry ?
- Eastbound Homes ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

## What causes white residue on composite decking in New Brunswick?

**White residue on composite decking is almost always efflorescence — a mineral salt deposit that migrates to the surface when moisture trapped inside the boards evaporates.** This is particularly common in New Brunswick due to the province's Maritime climate, where high humidity, frequent rain, and dramatic temperature swings between seasons create the perfect conditions for moisture cycling through composite materials.

Efflorescence typically appears during the first one to two years after installation, especially on capped composite boards that trap moisture between the polymer cap and the wood-fiber core. In New Brunswick, you will notice it most frequently in spring when snow and ice melt saturates decking that then dries rapidly during warmer afternoons. The white, chalky film can appear in patches or across entire boards, and it tends to be more visible on darker-coloured composites where the contrast is stark.

The good news is that efflorescence is cosmetic and does not indicate structural damage to your deck. In most cases, it resolves on its own after one or two full seasonal cycles as the residual manufacturing moisture works its way out of the boards. To speed up the process, wash the affected areas with warm water and a composite deck cleaner — avoid using a pressure washer above 1,500 PSI, as excessive pressure can damage the protective cap layer on the boards. A soft-bristle brush and a garden hose will handle most cases effectively.

If the white residue persists beyond the second year, there may be a drainage issue beneath the deck that is keeping moisture levels elevated. Poor airflow under the deck structure is a common contributor in New Brunswick builds, especially when decks are built close to grade on sloping lots where water pools against the house foundation. Ensure your joists have adequate spacing from the ground — a minimum of 12 inches of clearance is recommended — and that water drains away from the deck rather than collecting underneath.

Another less common cause of white residue is mould or mildew that appears whitish-grey rather than the typical green or black. New Brunswick's humid summers, where relative humidity regularly exceeds 80 percent along the Fundy coast, create ideal conditions for surface mould on composite decking, particularly in shaded areas that never fully dry. A composite-safe mould cleaner will resolve this quickly.

It is worth noting that some homeowners confuse pollen accumulation in spring with efflorescence. New Brunswick's birch and spruce pollen season in May and June can deposit a yellowish-white film on decks that looks similar. A simple wipe test will tell you which it is — pollen wipes away easily, while efflorescence requires scrubbing.

If you purchased your composite decking from a reputable manufacturer, check your warranty documentation. Many brands explicitly cover efflorescence under their surface warranties for the first few years. Keep your

purchase receipts and installation records, as manufacturers may require proof of proper installation before honouring a claim. Proper gapping between boards (typically 3/16 to 1/4 inch) and correct fastener placement both affect moisture drainage and can be factors in warranty assessments.

---

## **Find a Deck Building Contractor**

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [Worry No More Handyman Services ?](#)
- [Duguay Construction ?](#)
- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

## How do I fix squeaky deck boards in Dieppe NB?

**Squeaky deck boards are caused by loose fasteners that allow the board to move against the joist, and in Dieppe's freeze-thaw climate, this is one of the most common deck complaints.** The squeak itself is the sound of wood rubbing against the shaft of a nail or screw as the board flexes slightly under foot traffic. The fix is straightforward and well within the ability of most homeowners.

Dieppe typically experiences over 140 freeze-thaw cycles per year, and each cycle works against your deck fasteners. When moisture penetrates the wood around a screw or nail, it freezes and expands, slightly enlarging the hole. When it thaws, the fastener sits in a hole that is marginally larger than before. After 5 to 10 years of this process, the original fasteners have lost their grip and the boards can shift up and down by a fraction of a millimetre, which is enough to produce an audible squeak with every step.

Nails are far worse than screws for this problem. If your Dieppe deck was built with spiral or ring-shank nails, which was common practice through the early 2000s, the nails have almost certainly loosened throughout the deck. Screws provide dramatically better holding power because their threads maintain mechanical grip even as the surrounding wood fibres soften from moisture exposure.

To fix individual squeaky boards, the most effective method is to drive a new screw beside each existing fastener, approximately 2 inches away from the original. Use a structural deck screw that is at least 1/2 inch longer than the original fastener. For standard 5/4 decking on 2x joists, a 3-inch coated deck screw works well. Pre-drill through the deck board with a 1/8-inch bit to prevent splitting, especially if you are working near the end of a board or close to the edge. Drive the new screw until the head is just flush with the board surface but not countersunk so deeply that it creates a pocket where water collects.

Do not attempt to tighten the original loose fasteners by driving them deeper. A screw that has lost its grip in the wood will simply spin in the enlarged hole, and a nail driven further down will split the joist or push through without regaining holding power. The original fastener can be left in place. Pulling old screws or nails out creates additional holes and often damages the board surface.

For decks where the squeaking is widespread across most of the surface, a systematic approach saves time. Walk the entire deck and mark every squeaky spot with a piece of tape. Then work your way across the deck with a drill and a box of screws, adding one new fastener at each marked joist location. A typical 12-by-16-foot deck has roughly 120 board-to-joist connections, and replacing the worst 30 to 40 of those will usually eliminate the problem entirely. The materials cost for a box of 100 quality coated deck screws is around \$35 to \$50.

While you are working on the squeaks, check the condition of the joists below. If you notice any joists that feel soft when you probe them with an awl, or if the new screws do not bite firmly after 2 inches of penetration, that joist may have developed rot from sustained moisture exposure. A rotted joist will not hold any fastener reliably and needs to be sistered with a new piece of lumber bolted alongside it before the deck boards can be properly resecured above.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- R.e.j Construction ?
- Eastbound Homes ?
- Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

Q8

## Why are my deck post bases rotting in Riverview NB?

**Your deck post bases are rotting because the wood is in direct or near-direct contact with the ground without adequate drainage, and ground-level moisture is wicking into the end grain of the posts continuously.** End grain absorbs water at 10 to 15 times the rate of face grain, so even pressure-treated lumber will deteriorate when the base sits in a persistently wet condition. In Riverview, where the Petitcodiac River valley's clay-heavy soils retain moisture and the water table can be high in low-lying areas, post base rot is one of the most common structural deck failures.

The fundamental problem is how water interacts with the post base. When a post sits directly on a concrete footing or pier without a standoff, rainwater, snowmelt, and ground moisture collect in the joint between the post bottom and the footing surface. That thin film of water never fully evaporates because the post blocks airflow and sunlight. In Riverview's climate, with over 1,100 mm of annual precipitation and snow cover persisting from December through March, that joint stays wet for months at a time. The pressure treatment chemicals in the lumber slow the decay process but do not stop it indefinitely, particularly at the end grain where the chemical penetration is shallowest.

Posts that were set directly into concrete or buried in the ground without a gravel drainage bed are the worst cases. The concrete wicks ground moisture directly into the wood, and once rot begins at the base it progresses upward through the post interior where you cannot see it. By the time the outside surface shows obvious decay, the post may have lost 40 to 60 percent of its structural cross-section internally. This hidden rot is dangerous because the post can appear sound from the outside while being critically weakened on the inside.

To repair rotted post bases, the standard approach is to cut the post above the rotted section and install a metal post base connector. Temporarily support the beam above the post using an adjustable jack post placed beside the affected post. Cut the decayed post cleanly at a point above all visible rot, typically removing the bottom 6 to 12 inches. Install a galvanized or stainless steel post base bracket onto the concrete footing using concrete anchor bolts. The metal bracket elevates the bottom of the post approximately 1 inch above the footing surface, creating an air gap that allows water to drain and the end grain to dry. Set the freshly cut post into the bracket, check for plumb, and secure with the bracket's through-bolts or structural screws.

If the concrete footing itself is in poor condition, crumbling or undersized, this is the opportunity to replace it entirely. Dig down to below the 4-foot frost line, pour a new footing that is at least 18 inches in diameter with a flat top surface, set the metal post base bracket into the wet concrete with the anchor bolt template, and let it cure for at least 48 hours before loading.

For prevention going forward, every post on your deck should have a metal standoff base that keeps the wood above the footing surface. Brush-apply additional end-cut preservative to any freshly cut post bottoms before setting them in the bracket. Ensure the grade around each footing slopes away so surface water drains clear rather than pooling at the post base. In Riverview's clay soils, adding a ring of 3/4-inch crushed stone around each footing improves drainage significantly and reduces the moisture load that caused the rot in the first place.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)
- [Worry No More Handyman Services ?](#)
- [Duguay Construction ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

## What causes deck stain to peel in New Brunswick's Maritime climate?

**Deck stain peels in New Brunswick primarily because it was applied to wood that was too wet, applied during unsuitable weather conditions, or applied over an existing finish that was not fully removed.** The Maritime climate creates a narrow window for successful stain application, and missing that window is the root cause of most peeling failures across the province.

New Brunswick's humidity is the central challenge. The province's average relative humidity hovers between 70 and 85 percent from May through October, and in coastal areas like the Fundy shore and the Acadian Peninsula, it regularly exceeds 90 percent in the morning hours. When you apply stain to deck boards that contain more than about 15 percent moisture content, the stain cannot penetrate properly into the wood fibres. It sits on the surface as a film, and that film loses adhesion as the underlying moisture tries to escape. Within one season, the stain begins to crack, blister, and peel away in sheets.

Temperature at the time of application matters enormously. Most quality deck stains require a surface temperature between 10C and 32C and need at least 24 to 48 hours of dry weather after application to cure properly. In New Brunswick, spring weather is notoriously unpredictable. A sunny 18C afternoon in May can be followed by an overnight drop to 3C with fog rolling in off the Bay of Fundy. If the stain has not cured before that temperature drop, the finish becomes compromised at the molecular level even though it may look fine initially. The peeling shows up 3 to 6 months later and homeowners rarely connect it to the weather conditions on the day they stained.

Applying new stain over old stain that was not completely removed is the third major cause. Many homeowners power wash their deck, see the wood look clean, and apply fresh stain the next day. But remnants of the old finish remain embedded in the wood grain, and the new stain bonds to those remnants rather than to the wood itself. When those remnants eventually let go, the new stain peels off with them. Proper preparation requires stripping the old finish with a chemical deck stripper, rinsing thoroughly, and then brightening the wood with an oxalic acid-based brightener to open the wood pores and restore the pH balance. This preparation adds a full day to the project but is the difference between a finish that lasts 3 to 4 years and one that peels within months.

To fix a deck with peeling stain, you must strip all remaining finish down to bare wood. There is no shortcut. Use a commercial deck stripper applied according to the manufacturer's directions, scrub with a stiff bristle brush, and rinse at no more than 1,500 PSI with a pressure washer. Allow the deck to dry for a minimum of 48 hours of warm, dry weather before testing the moisture content. A simple moisture meter, available for under \$30 at any hardware store, should read below 15 percent before you proceed.

When reapplying, choose a penetrating oil-based stain rather than a film-forming solid stain. Penetrating stains soak into the wood rather than sitting on top of it, which makes them far more forgiving in high-humidity

environments. They wear away gradually through foot traffic and UV exposure rather than peeling, and when it is time to recoat in 2 to 3 years, you can apply fresh stain directly over the worn surface without stripping. The best application window in New Brunswick is typically late June through mid-September, during a stretch of at least 3 consecutive days with daytime highs above 15C, overnight lows above 8C, and no rain in the forecast.

---

## **Find a Deck Building Contractor**

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [Worry No More Handyman Services ?](#)
- [Larmondin Carpentry ?](#)
- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

## Why is water pooling on my deck surface in Moncton NB?

**Water pools on your deck because the surface lacks adequate slope away from the house, individual boards have warped, or both problems are occurring simultaneously.** Standing water on a deck is more than an inconvenience in Moncton. With the city's approximately 1,150 mm of annual precipitation and frequent spring rain events, pooled water accelerates wood decay, promotes algae growth, and creates slip hazards that persist long after the rain stops.

The primary cause of pooling is insufficient slope in the deck framing. Building best practice calls for a minimum slope of 1/8 inch per foot of deck run, falling away from the house. On a deck that projects 12 feet from the house wall, the outer edge should be approximately 1.5 inches lower than the ledger board connection. This slope is gentle enough to be nearly imperceptible when walking but steep enough to shed water reliably. Many decks in the Greater Moncton area were built dead level or even back-sloped slightly toward the house, either because the builder did not account for slope or because the footings and posts settled differently over time.

Post settling is common in Moncton's soil conditions. The Petitcodiac River valley has areas of clay and silt that shift with moisture changes and frost cycles. If your deck posts sit on shallow footings that have heaved or settled unevenly, the entire frame can tilt or develop low spots that trap water. Footings in this region need to extend below the 4-foot frost line to remain stable.

Board-level warping is the other major contributor. Pressure-treated lumber in Moncton's humid climate absorbs and releases moisture continuously, and over several years individual boards can develop crowns, cups, or twists that create low spots where water collects. A board that crowns upward at its centre forces water to pool along both edges, while a cupped board traps water in its concave centre.

To address framing-level slope issues, you can adjust the deck height at the outer beam. If your posts are accessible, loosening the beam-to-post connection and shimming or cutting the posts to create the proper 1/8-inch-per-foot slope is the most effective solution. For decks on adjustable post bases, this is relatively straightforward. For decks with posts set in concrete, you may need to add a new beam at a slightly lower height and transfer the joists onto it.

For individual warped boards causing localized pooling, removal and replacement of the worst offenders is the cleanest fix. When reinstalling or replacing boards, leave a 1/8-inch gap between adjacent boards so water can drain through to the ground below rather than pooling on the surface. Some homeowners try to plane or sand warped boards flat, which works for mild cases but removes the pressure-treated surface layer and requires immediate sealing of the freshly exposed wood.

As a preventive measure going forward, ensure the ground beneath your deck is graded to drain away from the house foundation. If water collects under the deck, the resulting humidity keeps the underside of the boards perpetually damp, which worsens the warping that caused the pooling in the first place. A layer of landscape fabric topped with 3 to 4 inches of crushed gravel beneath the deck improves drainage and reduces splash-back moisture.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?
- Worry No More Handyman Services ?
- Larmondin Carpentry ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

Q11

## How do I fix a deck that is pulling away from the house in Saint John NB?

**A deck pulling away from the house is a failed ledger board connection, and it is the single most dangerous structural defect a deck can have because it risks sudden catastrophic collapse.** This is not a cosmetic issue or a gradual maintenance concern. In Saint John, where decks are often elevated due to the city's hilly terrain, a ledger failure can mean a fall of 8 to 15 feet or more, causing serious injury or death. Treat this as an emergency and restrict access to the deck until the repair is completed.

The ledger board is the horizontal framing member that attaches the deck to the house's rim joist or band board. It carries roughly half the total weight of the deck, including all live loads from people, furniture, and snow. When the connection fails, the deck pivots downward away from the house like a hinge, and the collapse happens with almost no warning.

In Saint John's Maritime climate, ledger failures happen for specific reasons. The number one cause is missing or deteriorated flashing. Without proper flashing above the ledger, rain and snowmelt run down the house wall and into the gap between the ledger and the house sheathing. Saint John receives approximately 1,400 mm of precipitation annually, and that water rots the house rim joist, the ledger board, or both, weakening the wood that

the fasteners grip into. After 10 to 15 years of this hidden moisture intrusion, the wood becomes so soft that the lag bolts or screws simply pull through.

The second common cause is inadequate original fastening. Many older Saint John decks were attached with nails or with lag bolts that were too short, too few, or improperly spaced. The National Building Code requires 1/2-inch diameter lag bolts or through-bolts in a specific staggered pattern, typically at 16-inch intervals, penetrating through the ledger, through the house sheathing, and solidly into the rim joist.

To repair the connection, start by temporarily supporting the deck with adjustable jack posts or heavy-duty temporary posts placed close to the house, transferring the load to the ground. With the deck supported, remove the old fasteners and pull the ledger away enough to inspect the house rim joist behind it. If the rim joist is rotted, it must be replaced or reinforced with new lumber sistered alongside it from inside the basement or crawl space. There is no shortcut here; driving new bolts into rotten wood will fail again.

Once the rim joist is confirmed solid, reattach the ledger using 1/2-inch diameter hot-dipped galvanized or stainless steel lag bolts, at least 4 inches long, in a staggered pattern every 16 inches. Each bolt should have a washer, and pilot holes must be drilled to prevent splitting. Before final tightening, install self-adhesive flashing membrane over the top of the ledger and up the wall at least 6 inches, lapping under the house siding or cladding so water is directed outward rather than behind the ledger.

Given Saint John's exposure to Fundy-driven weather and the serious safety implications of a ledger failure, this repair should be inspected by a qualified professional. If your deck is more than one storey above grade, New Brunswick building code requires a permit for structural deck repairs, and the inspection provides documentation that the work meets code requirements.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- Larmondin Carpentry ?
- Eastbound Homes ?
- Duguay Construction ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

## Why are my deck boards cupping and how do I fix it in Fredericton?

**Deck boards cup because of a moisture differential between the top and bottom faces of the board, and in Fredericton's continental-Maritime climate with its wide humidity swings, this is an extremely common problem.** Cupping is the concave or convex warping across the width of a board, and understanding why it happens is the key to fixing and preventing it.

Wood gains and loses moisture unevenly. The top surface of a deck board is exposed to sun, wind, and rain, so it dries out faster and more completely than the bottom face, which stays damp from trapped humidity underneath the deck. When one face dries faster than the other, it shrinks more, and the board curves toward the drier side. In Fredericton, summer temperatures can reach 35C with direct sun heating the deck surface well above ambient, while the underside of the deck remains cool and damp. This creates a steep moisture gradient across the thickness of the board.

The grain orientation of the lumber plays a significant role. Boards installed bark-side-down, meaning the growth rings curve downward, tend to cup upward when the top face dries. This is because wood shrinks more along the growth rings than across them, and the geometry of the ring orientation amplifies the cupping in one direction. Many builders install boards bark-side-up to counteract this tendency, though opinions vary and neither orientation completely eliminates the risk in a climate as variable as Fredericton's.

Fredericton's freeze-thaw cycle makes cupping worse over time. The city typically experiences over 150 frost cycles per year, and each cycle drives moisture into and out of the wood. Boards that started with mild cupping in their first summer can develop pronounced cupping after 3 or 4 winters as the repeated moisture cycling permanently deforms the wood fibres.

For boards with mild cupping of 1/8 inch or less across their width, sanding the surface flat with a belt sander using 60-grit paper followed by 80-grit can restore a level walking surface. After sanding, apply a penetrating deck stain to both the top and bottom of the boards. Sealing both faces equalizes the moisture absorption rate and is the single most effective preventive measure against future cupping.

Boards with moderate cupping of 1/4 inch can sometimes be flipped over if the underside is in good condition. Remove the fasteners, flip the board, and refasten. The previously protected bottom face becomes the new top surface, and the cupping often works itself back toward flat as the moisture conditions reverse. This works best with boards that are otherwise structurally sound and have not developed cracks or splits.

Severely cupped boards, those with more than 1/4 inch of cupping, should be replaced. Deeply cupped boards create trip hazards and pool water in their concave centres, which accelerates further deterioration. When replacing

boards, choose lumber with tight, straight grain and seal all six faces including the cut ends before installation. Ensure the underside of your deck has adequate ventilation by maintaining at least 18 inches of clearance above grade, which helps equalize moisture levels between the top and bottom faces of every board.

---

## **Find a Deck Building Contractor**

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- [Duguay Construction ?](#)
- [Eastbound Homes ?](#)
- [Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?](#)

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

## What causes green algae to grow on my deck in New Brunswick?

**Green algae thrives on New Brunswick decks because the province's Maritime climate delivers the exact combination of persistent humidity, moderate temperatures, and frequent rain that algae needs to colonize wood and composite surfaces.** It is one of the most common deck maintenance issues across the province, from the Bay of Fundy coast to the Saint John River valley.

Algae is a simple plant organism that reproduces through airborne spores. Those spores are everywhere, and they settle on every outdoor surface continuously. The difference between a deck that stays clean and one that turns green comes down to moisture and shade. New Brunswick's average relative humidity sits between 70 and 85 percent for much of the year, and the province receives approximately 1,100 mm of annual precipitation spread fairly evenly across all seasons. A deck surface that stays damp for extended periods after rain gives algae spores the sustained moisture they need to germinate and establish colonies.

Shade is the other major factor. A deck surrounded by mature trees or positioned on the north side of a house receives limited direct sunlight, which means the surface dries slowly after rain and morning dew. UV radiation from direct sunlight also kills algae naturally, so shaded decks lose both the drying benefit and the sterilizing effect of the sun. Decks in wooded areas along the Miramichi, Kennebecasis, or Petitcodiac river valleys are especially prone because the tree canopy blocks sunlight while simultaneously dropping organic debris that feeds algae growth.

The surface texture of your decking material matters as well. Rough-sawn or heavily weathered pressure-treated lumber has microscopic grooves and open wood grain that trap moisture and give algae something to grip. Smooth composite decking resists algae better, but the capped surface can still develop a biofilm layer, especially in persistently shaded areas. Horizontal surfaces are always worse than vertical ones because water sits on them longer.

To remove existing algae, mix an oxygen bleach solution at the concentration recommended on the product label and apply it generously to the affected deck surface. Let it work for 10 to 15 minutes, then scrub with a stiff deck brush and rinse with a pressure washer set to no more than 1,500 PSI. Higher pressures will damage the wood fibres and actually create more texture for future algae to grip. Oxygen bleach is the preferred cleaner because it kills algae effectively without harming nearby plants, whereas chlorine bleach damages vegetation, discolours wood, and breaks down the lignin that holds wood fibres together.

To prevent algae from returning, improve air circulation around the deck by trimming overhanging branches to allow more sunlight and airflow across the surface. Ensure the gap between the bottom of your deck boards and the ground is at least 18 inches for adequate ventilation underneath. Apply a deck stain or sealer with built-in mildewcide every 2 to 3 years, choosing a product rated for high-humidity environments. Keeping the deck clear of

leaf litter and organic debris, especially in fall before the wet season intensifies, removes the nutrient base that algae feeds on.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the

<https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- R.e.j Construction ?
- Worry No More Handyman Services ?
- Eastbound Homes ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

Q14

## Why is my deck bouncy or springy when I walk on it in Moncton NB?

**A bouncy or springy deck is caused by undersized joists, excessive joist spans, or both, and it is a structural issue that should not be ignored.** While a little flex might seem harmless, that movement indicates the framing is being stressed beyond its comfortable capacity, and over time it leads to fastener failure, cracked boards, and potentially dangerous structural problems.

The most common cause in Moncton-area decks is joists that span too far without intermediate support. The National Building Code of Canada and New Brunswick's adopted code set maximum allowable spans based on joist size, spacing, and wood species. For SPF lumber at 16-inch on-centre spacing, a 2x8 joist should span no more than about 10 feet, and a 2x10 tops out around 13 feet. Many older decks in Moncton were built with 2x8 joists spanning 12 or even 14 feet without a mid-span beam, which felt fine when the wood was new and stiff but becomes progressively bouncier as the lumber ages and softens over years of Maritime moisture exposure.

### Diagnosing the Problem

Get underneath the deck and measure your joists. Note the lumber size, the spacing between joists, and the total unsupported span from the ledger board to the beam or from beam to beam. If the span exceeds the allowable maximum for your joist size, you have found the problem. Also look for joists that have developed a twist, a crown in the wrong direction, or visible cracking along the grain. Moncton's humidity, which regularly exceeds 80 percent

in summer, accelerates the softening of SPF lumber that was not kiln-dried before installation.

The most effective fix is to add a beam at mid-span, supported by properly footed posts. This cuts the effective span in half and eliminates the bounce immediately. For a deck with 2x8 joists spanning 14 feet, adding a beam at the 7-foot mark brings each span well within the safe range and transforms the feel of the deck entirely.

If adding a beam is not practical due to grade conditions or access limitations, sistering new joists alongside the existing ones is the next best option. Bolting a new full-length 2x10 against each existing 2x8 with 3/8-inch carriage bolts at 16-inch intervals effectively upgrades the joist to a much stiffer composite member. This approach requires temporarily removing some decking boards for access but does not require any new footings.

A lighter intervention is adding solid blocking between joists at mid-span and at third points. Cross-bracing or solid 2x blocking forces adjacent joists to share the load, reducing the bounce felt at any single point. Blocking alone will not fix a seriously overspanned deck, but it makes a meaningful improvement when the span is only slightly over the limit.

Do not simply add more screws to the deck boards or ignore the bounce. A deck that flexes excessively is working its fasteners loose with every footstep, and in Moncton's freeze-thaw climate those loosened connections deteriorate rapidly through winter.

---

## Find a Deck Building Contractor

New Brunswick Decks connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com>:

- R.e.j Construction ?
- Duguay Construction ?
- Hickory Dickory Decks Moncton ?

[View all fencing-decks contractors ?](#)

---

**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by New Brunswick Decks. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any deck building or renovation project. Information is current as of March 22, 2026 and may change. Visit [newbrunswickdecks.com](https://newbrunswickdecks.com) for the latest answers.