

CALGARY DECK CONTRACTORS

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# Composite Decking

Trex, TimberTech, Fiberon, and PVC deck installation — low-maintenance options engineered to resist Calgary's chinook cycling, UV, and freeze-thaw

23 Expert Answers from Deck IQ

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## What joist material works best under composite decking in Calgary — pressure-treated wood or steel?

**Pressure-treated lumber is the standard and most practical choice for composite deck joists in Calgary.**

Steel joists offer superior strength and dimensional stability but come with significant cost and installation challenges that make them impractical for most residential deck projects.

**Pressure-treated lumber joists** are the industry standard under composite decking for good reason. Modern ACQ or MCA treated lumber provides excellent rot and insect resistance, handles Calgary's freeze-thaw cycling well when properly installed, and costs significantly less than steel — typically \$3-6 per linear foot versus \$15-25 for steel joists. The key is using the right grade: select structural grade or better pressure-treated lumber rated for ground contact, even though deck joists aren't touching the ground. This higher grade lumber has fewer knots, straighter grain, and better dimensional stability than construction grade lumber.

Calgary's extreme climate actually favours pressure-treated lumber over steel for deck substructure. **Chinook temperature swings cause steel to expand and contract more dramatically than wood**, potentially loosening fastener connections over time. Steel joists also conduct heat and cold directly to the composite decking above, making the deck surface uncomfortably hot in summer sun and creating condensation issues during rapid temperature changes. Pressure-treated lumber provides natural thermal insulation between the ground and deck surface.

**Steel joists make sense only in specific situations:** spans over 16 feet where lumber would require doubled beams, areas with extreme moisture exposure like pool decks, or where the homeowner specifically wants the longest possible lifespan regardless of cost. Steel joists require welded connections or specialized brackets, must be galvanized or stainless to prevent rust, and need professional installation. Most Calgary deck contractors prefer working with wood framing due to familiarity and standard fastening methods.

**For composite decking installation**, pressure-treated joists actually provide better fastener holding power than steel. Hidden composite fastener systems are designed to bite into wood joists, and the slight give in wood accommodates the thermal expansion of composite boards better than rigid steel. Steel joists require pre-drilling for every fastener and specialized screws, adding time and cost to installation.

**Proper joist spacing is more important than material choice.** Composite decking typically requires 12-inch or 16-inch joist spacing depending on the product — closer than the 24-inch spacing sometimes used with wood decking. Check your composite manufacturer's specifications, as some premium lines allow 16-inch spacing while budget composites require 12-inch. Under-supported composite decking will feel bouncy and may void the warranty.

**When to consider steel joists:** If you're building a large elevated deck over 400 square feet, have spans exceeding 14 feet, or want maximum longevity regardless of cost, steel joists engineered by a structural professional may be worth the investment. For typical Calgary deck projects under 300 square feet with standard 8-12 foot spans, pressure-treated lumber joists are the practical choice that will outlast the composite decking above them.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors familiar with proper joist spacing and fastening systems for your specific composite product.

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Q2

## How does Deckorators Vault composite decking perform in Calgary compared to higher-priced Trex Transcend?

**Both Deckorators Vault and Trex Transcend are capped composite decking lines that perform well in Calgary's extreme climate, but Transcend offers superior fade resistance and a stronger warranty at a 15-20% price premium.**

Deckorators Vault is positioned as a premium mid-tier composite with a polymer cap that protects against moisture, staining, and UV damage. In Calgary's intense UV environment at 1,045 metres elevation, Vault's capped surface resists the rapid fading that destroys uncapped composites within 2-3 seasons. The material handles Calgary's chinook freeze-thaw cycling well — the polymer cap prevents moisture infiltration that causes swelling and cracking in lesser composites. Vault typically runs \$12-15 per square foot for materials in the Calgary market.

**Trex Transcend represents the premium tier with several Calgary-specific advantages.** The shell technology provides deeper UV protection, which matters significantly in Calgary's high-elevation sun exposure. Transcend consistently shows less colour shift over 5-10 years compared to mid-tier capped composites. The material's density and cap thickness also provide better hail resistance — important given Calgary's reputation as Canada's hailstorm capital. Transcend runs \$15-18 per square foot for materials, making it 20-25% more expensive than Vault.

**For Calgary's dry climate, both materials avoid the wood shrinkage issues that plague pressure-treated and cedar decks.** Neither will gap, check, or split as they dry, unlike wood decking that can shrink 3-5mm between boards in Calgary's low humidity. Both handle snow loads well and won't absorb moisture during chinook melt-refreeze cycles.

**The warranty difference is significant for long-term value.** Vault offers a 25-year limited warranty, while Transcend provides a 25-year fade and stain warranty plus a 50-year limited structural warranty. Given that a typical Calgary deck represents a \$15,000-25,000 investment, the stronger warranty coverage can justify Transcend's premium pricing.

**Installation requirements are identical** — both need manufacturer-approved hidden fastening systems and proper ventilation underneath. Both require the same structural support (16-inch joist spacing maximum) and handle Calgary's temperature swings from -30°C to +30°C without expansion issues.

**For most Calgary homeowners, Vault offers excellent value** — 90% of Transcend's performance at 80% of the cost. Choose Transcend if you're planning to stay in the home long-term, have a high-visibility deck where fade resistance matters most, or live in a particularly hail-prone area. Choose Vault for strong performance at a more moderate price point, especially if you're planning to sell within 10-15 years.

Both dramatically outperform wood decking in Calgary's climate. A cedar deck requires restaining every 1-2 years at \$3-8 per square foot, while both composites need only occasional cleaning. Over 15 years, the maintenance savings alone often justify the higher upfront composite cost.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with premium composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who specialize in Trex, Deckorators, and other leading composite brands.

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Q3

## How much does a custom curved composite deck with radius boards cost in a Calgary neighbourhood like Elbow Park?

A custom curved composite deck with radius boards in Elbow Park typically costs \$60-90 per square foot fully installed, with most projects ranging from \$18,000-\$45,000 depending on size, elevation, and design complexity.

Curved decks require significantly more labour and specialized materials than standard rectangular designs.

**Radius composite boards** from manufacturers like Trex and TimberTech cost 40-60% more than straight boards due to the specialized manufacturing process. These pre-curved boards eliminate the need for costly field bending and provide clean, consistent curves that look professionally finished. Material costs alone run \$15-25 per square foot for quality radius composite decking, compared to \$10-18 for standard straight boards.

The **labour premium for curved construction** is substantial. Creating smooth curves requires precise layout, specialized cutting techniques, and often custom-bent steel or laminated wood framing underneath. Experienced deck builders charge 50-80% more labour for curved sections because of the additional time required for layout, cutting, and fitting. Many contractors subcontract the curved framing to specialists, adding another markup layer.

**Calgary's climate actually favours composite for curved applications** because the material won't warp, twist, or check like wood would when bent into curves. Chinook freeze-thaw cycling puts extra stress on curved joints and connections, making composite's dimensional stability particularly valuable. The extreme UV at Calgary's elevation also makes composite's fade resistance important for maintaining consistent colour across complex curved surfaces.

**Elbow Park's affluent market** supports premium deck construction, and curved composite decks are considered high-end features. Properties in this established inner-city neighbourhood often have mature landscaping and architectural details that curved decks complement beautifully. However, **setback requirements** in Elbow Park are strict due to smaller lot sizes, so verify property line clearances before finalizing curved deck plans that may extend further into yards than rectangular designs.

**Additional cost factors** include engineered footings for the irregular load patterns of curved framing (\$300-600 per footing), custom railings that follow the deck curves (\$120-200 per linear foot), and often structural engineering for elevated curved sections (\$1,500-3,000). Permits are required for any deck over 24 inches above grade, and curved designs may require additional structural drawings.

**Practical sizing expectations:** A 300-square-foot curved composite deck runs \$18,000-27,000. A larger 500-square-foot elevated curved deck with custom railings and integrated lighting can reach \$35,000-45,000. The investment is substantial, but curved composite decks add significant visual appeal and property value while requiring minimal maintenance over their 25+ year lifespan.

**When to hire a pro:** Curved deck construction requires specialized experience with radius framing, composite installation techniques, and often structural engineering. This is definitely professional-only work. Look for contractors with specific curved deck portfolios and experience with radius composite products.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with curved composite construction? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with specialists who regularly work in Elbow Park and similar upscale Calgary neighbourhoods.

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## How much does it cost to install composite deck boards with a picture-frame border design in Calgary?

**Composite decking with a picture-frame border typically costs \$45-75 per square foot installed in Calgary, which is 15-25% more than standard composite installation due to the additional labour and material waste involved in the border design.**

The picture-frame border creates a sophisticated finished look by running the perimeter boards perpendicular to the field boards, but it requires more precise cutting, additional blocking between joists, and generates 10-15% material waste from cuts and shorter pieces. For a typical 300-square-foot deck, expect to pay \$13,500-\$22,500 total, compared to \$12,000-\$21,000 for the same deck without the border detail.

**Material costs for composite picture-frame designs** run \$12-20 per square foot depending on the product line you choose. Premium capped composites like Trex Transcend or TimberTech Legacy are at the upper end, while entry-level lines like Trex Select are more affordable. The border design requires purchasing boards in multiple directions, so your contractor will need to order 10-15% extra material to account for cuts and waste. Hidden fastener systems like Trex Hideaway or TimberTech CONCEALoc are essential for the clean look — face-screwing composite boards ruins the aesthetic and voids most warranties.

**Labour costs increase significantly** because picture-frame borders require additional blocking between joists to support the perimeter boards running perpendicular to the main field. Each corner requires precise 45-degree miters, and the transition between border and field boards needs careful planning to avoid narrow strips or awkward layouts. Experienced deck builders charge \$30-55 per square foot for labour on picture-frame installations, compared to \$25-45 for standard composite decking.

**Calgary's climate considerations** make composite an excellent choice for picture-frame designs. The dimensional stability of capped composite means the mitered corners and perpendicular joints won't open up during chinook temperature swings like they would with wood decking. Calgary's extreme UV at 1,045 metres elevation will fade wood borders unevenly, but quality composite maintains consistent colour across the entire deck surface. The low-maintenance nature of composite is especially valuable for intricate designs that would be time-consuming to sand and restain annually.

**Additional costs to factor in** include upgraded hidden fasteners (\$2-4 per square foot), additional blocking lumber for perpendicular support (\$1-2 per square foot), and potentially a more complex permit drawing if the deck is over 600mm above grade. Some contractors charge a design fee of \$200-500 for picture-frame layouts to ensure proper joist spacing and board layout before construction begins.

**Timing considerations** are important in Calgary's short building season. Picture-frame installations take 20-30% longer than standard decking, so book your contractor early in the spring for summer completion. The precise cutting required works best in dry conditions — Calgary's low humidity is actually ideal for composite installation since there are no moisture content concerns like with wood.

**When to hire a professional** is straightforward for picture-frame designs — this is definitely not a DIY project. The blocking modifications, precise measurements, and complex cuts require professional tools and experience. Mistakes in the layout or corner miters are expensive to fix and highly visible in the finished product.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite picture-frame installations? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors who specialize in premium composite designs and understand the structural requirements for perpendicular board layouts.

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Q5

## How long do composite deck boards typically last in Calgary before they need to be replaced?

**Modern composite deck boards typically last 25-30 years in Calgary's climate before replacement is needed, with many premium capped composite products carrying warranties of 25 years to lifetime.** This makes composite decking one of the longest-lasting deck surface materials available for Calgary homeowners, significantly outperforming wood options in our extreme climate conditions.

**Composite decking performs exceptionally well in Calgary specifically because it's engineered to handle the exact challenges our climate presents.** Unlike wood, composite boards won't warp, split, or check during

Calgary's notorious chinook cycles — those rapid temperature swings from -25°C to +10°C that cause wood to expand and contract violently. The freeze-thaw cycling that destroys wood deck surfaces within 8-12 years has minimal impact on quality composite materials. Additionally, composite resists Calgary's intense UV exposure at 1,045 metres elevation much better than untreated wood, which can turn grey and begin surface checking within a single season.

**The actual lifespan depends significantly on the specific composite product quality and installation.** Early-generation composite decking from the 1990s and early 2000s had issues with fading, staining, and moisture absorption, giving the category a mixed reputation. However, modern capped composite products from manufacturers like Trex (Transcend and Select lines), TimberTech (Legacy and Edge collections), and Fiberon (Horizon and Good Life series) feature protective polymer shells that dramatically improve durability and fade resistance. These capped composites typically show minimal fading even after 15-20 years in Calgary's high-UV environment.

**Calgary's dry climate actually benefits composite decking longevity.** While our low humidity causes wood to shrink and check, composite materials remain dimensionally stable year-round. The dry air also reduces the risk of mould and mildew growth that can stain composite surfaces in more humid climates. Calgary's frequent hailstorms, which can damage cedar decking, typically don't affect composite boards due to their density and flexibility.

**Maintenance requirements are minimal but not zero.** Composite decking needs periodic cleaning with soap and water or a deck cleaner to remove dirt, pollen, and organic staining. In Calgary's dusty environment, an annual cleaning is usually sufficient. Unlike wood decking that requires staining every 1-3 years at a cost of \$3-8 per square foot, composite maintenance costs are limited to cleaning supplies — typically under \$50 annually for a typical 300-square-foot deck.

**When replacement does eventually become necessary, it's usually due to aesthetic rather than structural concerns.** After 20-25 years, even premium composite may show some colour fading or surface wear in high-traffic areas. The boards remain structurally sound, but homeowners may choose to replace them for appearance reasons. The substructure (joists, beams, footings) typically outlasts the decking surface regardless of material choice.

**The higher upfront cost of composite — \$40-70 per square foot installed versus \$25-45 for pressure-treated wood — is offset by the longer lifespan and minimal maintenance costs.** Over a 25-year period, composite often costs less per year than wood when you factor in regular staining, board replacement, and the labour involved in ongoing maintenance.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who specialize in low-maintenance composite deck

systems designed for our extreme climate.

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Q6

## How much does a full 16x20 TimberTech composite deck cost installed in Calgary including railings and stairs?

**A fully installed 16x20 TimberTech composite deck in Calgary typically costs \$20,000-\$28,000 including railings and stairs.** This breaks down to roughly \$62-87 per square foot for the complete project with professional installation.

Here's the detailed cost breakdown for your 320-square-foot deck:

**TimberTech decking materials** run \$10-16 per square foot depending on the product line. TimberTech AZEK (their premium capped composite) is at the higher end, while TimberTech Edge is more affordable. For 320 square feet, expect \$3,200-\$5,120 in decking materials alone.

**Complete installation costs** include footings (minimum 4 feet deep in Calgary), pressure-treated substructure framing, TimberTech decking with hidden fasteners, railings, and stairs. Professional installation adds \$30-45 per square foot to the material cost. The total installed cost typically ranges \$40-70 per square foot for composite decks in Calgary's market.

**Railings add significantly to the total cost** — budget \$75-120 per linear foot for aluminum railings or \$50-80 per linear foot for composite railings that match your TimberTech decking. A 16x20 deck typically needs 50-60 linear feet of railing, adding \$2,500-\$7,200 to your project. **Stairs** cost \$800-\$2,000 depending on the height and number of steps required.

**Calgary's climate makes TimberTech an excellent choice** for long-term value. While the upfront cost is 40-60% higher than pressure-treated lumber, TimberTech's capped composite surface resists Calgary's intense UV at elevation, handles chinook freeze-thaw cycling without warping or splitting, and requires virtually no maintenance beyond occasional cleaning. You'll save \$300-600 annually on staining and sealing compared to a wood deck.

**Additional costs to factor in** include a building permit (\$200-400 for a deck this size), footing excavation and concrete (\$1,200-\$2,000 for 6-8 footings), and potential electrical work if you want deck lighting (\$500-\$2,000). The total project cost including these extras typically reaches \$22,000-\$32,000.

**Timing considerations:** Calgary's deck building season runs May through October, and most contractors book up by March or April. TimberTech installation requires dry conditions and temperatures above 5°C for proper fastener performance. Plan to get quotes and permits lined up by February for summer construction.

Need help finding a TimberTech-certified deck builder? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced composite decking contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who specialize in TimberTech installation and understand Calgary's specific climate requirements.

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## How does the cost of PVC decking compare to composite decking for a Calgary installation?

**PVC decking typically costs 15-25% more than composite decking in Calgary, but the performance differences in our extreme climate may justify the premium for many homeowners.**

**Material costs** for PVC decking (Azek, TimberTech Advanced PVC) run \$12-20 per square foot compared to \$10-18 per square foot for capped composite (Trex, TimberTech, Fiberon). For a typical 300-square-foot deck, you're looking at \$3,600-\$6,000 for PVC materials versus \$3,000-\$5,400 for composite materials — a difference of \$600-\$1,200 in raw materials. Fully installed, expect \$45-75 per square foot for PVC versus \$40-70 per square foot for composite, meaning that same 300-square-foot deck runs \$13,500-\$22,500 for PVC compared to \$12,000-\$21,000 for composite.

**The performance difference in Calgary's climate is significant.** PVC decking is completely impervious to moisture absorption, making it ideal for our chinook freeze-thaw cycles. While capped composite performs well in Calgary's extreme weather, PVC takes moisture resistance to the next level — it literally cannot absorb water, swell, or support mould growth. This makes PVC particularly valuable around hot tubs, pools, or areas where the deck surface stays wet frequently. PVC also handles Calgary's extreme UV better than most composites, with less colour fading over time, though both materials far outperform wood in UV resistance.

**Weight and temperature considerations** also favour PVC in Calgary conditions. PVC decking is lighter than composite, which can reduce structural requirements and make installation easier. More importantly for Calgary summers, PVC stays cooler underfoot than composite when exposed to our intense high-altitude UV. Dark composite colours can become uncomfortably hot during July and August, while PVC maintains a more comfortable surface temperature.

**Maintenance and longevity** are virtually identical between quality PVC and capped composite — both require only periodic cleaning and offer 25-year to lifetime warranties. The key advantage of PVC is dimensional stability. While composite can experience minor thermal expansion and contraction during our extreme temperature swings, PVC remains more dimensionally stable through chinook cycles.

**Installation costs are similar** for both materials, as they use comparable fastening systems and require similar substructure. However, PVC's lighter weight can sometimes reduce labour time and structural requirements, potentially offsetting some of the material cost premium.

**For Calgary homeowners**, the choice often comes down to budget versus performance priorities. If you're building near water features, in areas with poor drainage, or want the absolute best moisture resistance for chinook cycling,

PVC justifies its premium. For most standard deck applications, quality capped composite offers excellent performance at a lower cost. Both materials dramatically outperform wood in Calgary's climate for long-term value and low maintenance.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with both PVC and composite installations? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who can provide detailed quotes comparing both options for your specific project.

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Q8

## How much does it cost per square foot to install a Trex composite deck in Calgary compared to wood?

**Trex composite decking costs \$40-70 per square foot installed in Calgary, compared to \$25-45 per square foot for pressure-treated wood and \$35-55 per square foot for cedar.** While composite has a higher upfront cost, it eliminates the ongoing staining and maintenance expenses that wood requires every 1-3 years in Calgary's harsh climate.

**Material costs alone** show the difference clearly. Trex decking materials run \$10-18 per square foot, while pressure-treated lumber costs \$3-6 per square foot and cedar runs \$6-12 per square foot. However, labour costs are similar across all materials — the real difference comes in long-term maintenance requirements.

**Calgary's extreme climate makes composite particularly cost-effective over time.** Chinook winds create rapid freeze-thaw cycles that crack wood finishes and pop fasteners, while Calgary's intense UV at 1,045 metres elevation bleaches unprotected wood within one season. A cedar deck requires restaining every 1-2 years at \$3-8

per square foot, while pressure-treated needs restaining every 2-3 years. Over 15 years, maintenance costs on a 300-square-foot wood deck can easily reach \$3,000-\$7,500, while Trex requires only occasional cleaning with soap and water.

**Specific Calgary pricing examples** for a typical 300-square-foot deck: pressure-treated runs \$7,500-\$13,500 installed, cedar costs \$10,500-\$16,500, and Trex ranges from \$12,000-\$21,000. Premium Trex lines like Transcend are at the upper end, while Select and Enhance fall in the middle range. When you factor in 15 years of wood maintenance costs, the total ownership cost often favours composite.

**Additional Calgary considerations** include hail resistance — Trex's density makes it more resistant to hail damage than cedar, which is important since Calgary is often called the hailstorm capital of Canada. Trex also handles Calgary's dry climate without the shrinkage and checking that affects wood decking, maintaining consistent board spacing and appearance year-round.

**Installation timing affects costs** since Calgary's deck building season runs May through October. Most contractors are fully booked by March or April, so planning ahead can help secure better pricing. Trex installation requires manufacturer-specified hidden fasteners or colour-matched screws, which adds \$1-2 per square foot compared to standard wood screws, but creates a cleaner appearance with no visible fasteners.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who specialize in Trex and other premium composite brands.

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Q9

# What is the total cost difference over 20 years between maintaining a wood deck and a composite deck in Calgary?

A wood deck in Calgary typically costs \$8,000-15,000 more over 20 years compared to composite when you factor in maintenance, while composite has virtually zero ongoing costs beyond occasional cleaning.

The total cost difference is dramatic because Calgary's extreme climate accelerates wood maintenance needs significantly compared to milder regions. Here's the realistic 20-year breakdown:

## Wood Deck Maintenance Costs (20 Years):

- **Staining/sealing every 2-3 years:** \$900-2,400 per application × 7-8 applications = \$6,300-19,200
- **Board replacement (rot, splitting, warping):** 15-25% of boards typically need replacement by year 10-15 = \$1,500-4,000
- **Fastener replacement (popped screws/nails):** Chinook cycling loosens fasteners = \$300-800
- **Deep cleaning and prep work:** Power washing, sanding, repairs before each staining = \$1,200-3,000 total
- **Total wood maintenance:** \$9,300-27,000 over 20 years

## Composite Deck Maintenance Costs (20 Years):

- **Annual cleaning:** Soap and water or deck cleaner = \$50-150 per year = \$1,000-3,000 total
- **No staining, sealing, or board replacement needed**
- **Total composite maintenance:** \$1,000-3,000 over 20 years

**Calgary Climate Factors That Increase Wood Costs:** Calgary's chinook winds create rapid freeze-thaw cycling that cracks finishes and pops fasteners faster than anywhere else in Canada. A wood deck here needs restaining every 2 years instead of the 3-4 years typical in milder climates. The extreme UV at 1,045 metres elevation bleaches unprotected wood in a single season, and the dry climate causes significant checking and splitting that requires board replacement sooner.

**Real-World Cost Example:** A 300-square-foot cedar deck costs about \$13,500 installed. Over 20 years, maintenance adds another \$12,000-18,000, bringing the total to \$25,500-31,500. The same size composite deck costs \$15,000-18,000 installed with only \$1,500-2,500 in cleaning costs over 20 years, totaling \$16,500-20,500. **The composite deck saves \$9,000-11,000 over two decades** while requiring virtually no maintenance time or effort.

**When Wood Makes Sense:** If you enjoy the natural wood aesthetic and don't mind annual maintenance, cedar can be rewarding. But if you want to spend weekends enjoying your deck rather than maintaining it, composite pays for itself within 10-12 years in Calgary's harsh climate.

Need help finding a deck builder to discuss material options? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced contractors who understand how different materials perform in our unique climate.

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## What composite decking brands hold up best to Calgary's intense UV exposure at our 1,045-metre elevation?

**Modern capped composite decking from Trex, TimberTech, and Fiberon all perform exceptionally well in Calgary's intense UV conditions, with capped products offering the best fade resistance at our elevation.**

The polymer shell that encases these boards is specifically engineered with UV stabilizers to handle extreme sun exposure like Calgary's 1,045-metre elevation delivers.

**TimberTech Advanced Protection (AZEK) and TimberTech Legacy Collection** lead the pack for UV resistance in Calgary conditions. The Advanced Protection line uses a proprietary polymer cap that's been tested in Arizona desert conditions — similar UV intensity to what Calgary receives. Their lighter colours like Coastline, Brownstone, and Harvest show virtually no fading after 5+ years of Calgary sun. The Legacy Collection offers the most realistic wood grain textures while maintaining excellent UV stability. Expect 25-year fade and stain warranties that actually hold up in Calgary's climate.

**Trex Transcend and Trex Enhance lines** also perform very well at Calgary's elevation. Transcend uses Trex's most advanced shell technology with superior UV blockers. Island Mist, Rope Swing, and Tree House colours have shown excellent fade resistance in Calgary installations over the past decade. The Enhance line offers good UV protection at a lower price point, though darker colours like Clam Shell and Saddle may show some fading after 7-10 years of intense Calgary sun.

**Fiberon Horizon and Paramount collections** round out the top performers. Fiberon's PermaTech cap technology includes advanced UV stabilizers that work particularly well in high-elevation environments. Their Ipe and Castle Gray colours maintain their appearance exceptionally well in Calgary's conditions. Fiberon also offers one of the longest fade warranties in the industry — up to 25 years depending on the product line.

**Calgary's unique climate factors make capped composite essential.** Our elevation puts us closer to the sun's UV radiation, and our dry air means there's less atmospheric moisture to filter UV rays. Additionally, Calgary's frequent chinook winds create rapid temperature swings that stress uncapped composite materials, causing them to expand and contract more dramatically. The polymer cap on premium composite decking flexes with these temperature changes while protecting the core material from UV penetration.

**Colour selection matters significantly in Calgary.** Lighter colours like greys, tans, and weathered browns show less fading than darker colours like chocolate brown, mahogany, or black. Dark colours absorb more heat and UV energy, accelerating any fade that might occur. They also become uncomfortably hot to walk on during Calgary's intense summer afternoons — sometimes reaching 60+ degrees Celsius on a 30-degree day.

**Installation timing affects long-term UV performance.** Install composite decking during Calgary's optimal building season (May through September) when temperatures are consistently above 10 degrees Celsius. This allows the material to acclimate properly and the cap to fully bond with the core. Boards installed in cold weather may not perform as well long-term.

**Expect to pay \$12-18 per square foot for materials** for these premium capped composite lines, with installation bringing total costs to \$45-65 per square foot. While the upfront investment is higher than wood, these products typically maintain their appearance for 20-25 years in Calgary's UV conditions with minimal maintenance beyond annual cleaning.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with premium composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors who specialize in these high-performance materials and understand Calgary's unique climate requirements.

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**Looking for experienced contractors?** The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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Q11

## **What colour of composite decking fades the least in Calgary given our high UV index in summer?**

**Lighter colours fade significantly less than darker colours in Calgary's intense UV exposure at 1,045 metres elevation.** Greys, tans, and weathered wood tones maintain their appearance much better than browns, reds, or exotic dark colours over 10-15 years.

**Why colour matters at Calgary's elevation:** Calgary receives among the highest annual UV exposure of any major Canadian city due to our elevation and clear, dry air. The UV index regularly hits 8-10 in summer, and there's

less atmospheric filtering than at sea level. Dark composite colours absorb more UV energy and show fading more dramatically — a rich chocolate brown deck can shift to a washed-out tan within 5-7 years, while a light grey or driftwood tone may show minimal change over the same period.

**Best performing colours in Calgary's climate** include light greys (like Trex Pebble Grey or TimberTech Silver Maple), weathered wood tones (Trex Spiced Rum, Fiberon Ipe), and natural cedar colours (TimberTech Antique Leather). These colours are formulated to hide UV-related colour shifts rather than fight them. Many manufacturers now offer "fade-resistant" or "heat-resistant" versions of popular colours specifically engineered for high-UV climates like Calgary's.

**Capped composite technology makes a huge difference.** Modern capped composites like Trex Transcend, TimberTech AZEK, and Fiberon Paramount have a protective polymer shell that blocks UV from reaching the colour layer underneath. Uncapped composites (older generation products) fade much faster because UV penetrates directly into the colour throughout the board thickness. The premium is worth it in Calgary — expect 15-20% better colour retention with capped products.

**Practical colour selection tips:** Visit a deck display yard that's been outdoors for 3-5 years to see real-world fading. Many Calgary deck builders keep sample boards exposed to show aging. Darker colours also get significantly hotter underfoot in Calgary's intense summer sun — a dark brown deck can reach 60+ degrees Celsius on a sunny afternoon, while light grey stays 10-15 degrees cooler. If you love the look of darker wood tones, consider them for shaded areas and use lighter colours for full-sun deck sections.

**Maintenance and warranty considerations:** Most capped composite manufacturers offer 25-year fade warranties, but read the fine print — they typically guarantee against "excessive" fading (usually defined as more than a specific colour shift measured scientifically). Even with warranties, choosing fade-resistant colours upfront saves the hassle of warranty claims and ensures your deck looks great for decades in Calgary's challenging UV environment.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors familiar with the best colour choices for our climate.

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Q12

## How much does it cost to remove an old wood deck and replace it with composite in a Calgary neighbourhood like Kensington?

**Removing an old wood deck and replacing it with composite typically costs \$50-80 per square foot in Calgary neighbourhoods like Kensington, with a 300-square-foot deck replacement running \$15,000-\$24,000 including demolition, disposal, and new construction.**

The total cost breaks down into several components that are particularly relevant in established Calgary communities like Kensington. **Demolition and disposal** runs \$8-15 per square foot, depending on the deck's height, complexity, and access for equipment. In Kensington's mature neighbourhood with narrow lots and established landscaping, contractors often need to hand-carry materials to the street rather than using machinery, which increases labour costs. Calgary's landfill tipping fees and the distance to disposal sites add \$500-1,200 to most projects.

**New composite deck construction** costs \$40-70 per square foot for materials and installation, with premium capped composite lines like Trex Transcend or TimberTech Legacy at the upper end. The substructure (joists, beams, posts, footings) typically uses pressure-treated lumber regardless of the decking material choice. If the existing footings are properly installed below Calgary's 4-foot frost line and in good condition, they may be reusable, saving \$200-500 per footing. However, many older Calgary decks have shallow or deteriorated footings that must be completely replaced.

**Kensington-specific considerations** include the neighbourhood's mature trees, which provide natural shade but can complicate equipment access and material delivery. The area's mix of character homes and infills means deck designs often need to complement heritage architecture while meeting current Alberta Building Code requirements. Many Kensington properties have rear lane access, which can reduce material handling costs compared to front-street-only access in some Calgary communities.

**Calgary's climate makes composite an excellent choice for deck replacement.** Composite decking handles the city's extreme chinook freeze-thaw cycling without the warping, splitting, and checking that destroys wood decks. At Calgary's elevation of 1,045 metres, UV exposure is intense enough to turn unprotected cedar grey within

one season, while quality composite maintains its colour for decades. The chinook winds that can swing temperatures 30 degrees in hours cause rapid expansion and contraction that pops fasteners and cracks wood finishes, but composite remains dimensionally stable.

**Additional costs to budget for** include permit fees (\$150-500 if the new deck exceeds 600mm above grade), electrical updates if adding deck lighting (\$800-2,500), and potential utility line marking if new footings are required. In established neighbourhoods like Kensington, older homes may have knob-and-tube wiring or inadequate electrical service that needs upgrading before adding deck circuits.

**Timing is critical in Calgary's short building season.** Most deck contractors are booked by March or April for summer construction, so plan your replacement project well in advance. Demolition can begin once the ground thaws (typically mid-April), but new footing installation requires soil conditions that allow proper excavation and concrete curing. The ideal window for deck replacement is May through September when temperatures consistently stay above 10 degrees Celsius.

**Professional removal and replacement is strongly recommended** for any elevated deck project. Demolition involves working at height with power tools, and proper disposal of treated lumber requires knowledge of environmental regulations. New composite deck installation requires precise fastener spacing, proper expansion gaps, and manufacturer-specific installation techniques that affect warranty coverage.

Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who specialize in deck replacement projects in established neighbourhoods like Kensington, where access challenges and heritage home considerations require local expertise.

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- Ardco Construction
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## Does composite decking expand and contract more than wood in Calgary's temperature extremes and how do you account for that?

**Composite decking actually expands and contracts significantly more than wood in Calgary's extreme temperature swings, but modern installation techniques easily accommodate this movement without structural issues.**

Composite materials have a much higher coefficient of thermal expansion than wood — typically 3-5 times greater. In Calgary's extreme temperature range (from -30°C winter lows to +30°C summer highs, with chinook swings of 20-30 degrees in hours), a 16-foot composite deck board can expand and contract up to 12-15mm over the seasonal cycle. Wood moves primarily with moisture changes rather than temperature, so it's actually more dimensionally stable than composite in Calgary's dry climate with extreme temperature cycling.

**Proper gapping and fastening techniques handle composite expansion easily.** Modern composite decking systems are designed for this movement. End-to-end board gaps should be 6-8mm in Calgary (wider than the 3-4mm recommended in milder climates). Side-to-side gaps between boards should be 5-6mm. Most importantly, composite boards must be fastened with hidden fastener systems or screws placed in the center of pre-drilled holes — never tight to one end. This allows the board to "float" and move freely as temperatures change. Boards that are over-fastened or gapped too tightly will buckle, bow, or crack at fastener points during expansion.

**Calgary's chinook winds create unique challenges for composite decking** because the rapid temperature swings happen so quickly. A board that's contracted in -25°C morning air can expand significantly by afternoon when chinooks push temperatures to +10°C. Quality composite manufacturers like Trex, TimberTech, and Fiberon have engineered their fastening systems specifically for this type of extreme cycling. Their hidden clip systems allow movement while maintaining a clean appearance and preventing the "oil-canning" (wavy appearance) that can occur with improperly fastened composite boards.

**Installation timing matters in Calgary's climate.** Composite decking installed during hot summer weather (25-30°C) should use maximum recommended gaps, as the boards will contract significantly during winter. Boards installed during cool spring or fall weather (10-15°C) can use standard gap recommendations. Many Calgary deck builders prefer installing composite in shoulder seasons (May or September) when temperatures are moderate and the boards are near their mid-range expansion state.

**Composite's thermal movement is predictable and manageable, unlike wood's moisture-driven movement** which can be erratic in Calgary's dry climate. Pressure-treated lumber shrinks as it dries from its initial high moisture content, then continues to move with seasonal humidity changes. Cedar checks and splits unpredictably as it dries. Composite moves smoothly and predictably with temperature — no surprise gaps, splits, or warping.

This is why composite has become the preferred choice for Calgary homeowners who want consistent appearance and performance through extreme weather cycles.

**Professional installation is crucial for composite decking** specifically because of the expansion requirements. DIY installers often gap boards like wood (too tight) or over-fasten them, leading to buckling and warranty voids. Experienced Calgary deck contractors understand the local climate requirements and follow manufacturer specifications for thermal movement. The higher material cost of composite makes proper installation even more critical — mistakes are expensive to fix.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors from the Calgary Construction Network who understand thermal movement requirements for our extreme climate.

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Q14

## Is Fiberon composite decking a good budget alternative to Trex for a Calgary deck build?

**Fiberon is an excellent budget alternative to Trex for Calgary decks, offering similar performance at 10-20% lower cost while handling Calgary's extreme chinook cycling and UV exposure just as well as premium brands.**

Fiberon's capped composite lines (Horizon, Symmetry, and Good Life) use the same basic technology as Trex Transcend and Select — a wood-fiber composite core wrapped in a protective polymer shell that resists moisture, UV fading, staining, and mold growth. In Calgary's challenging climate, this capped construction is what matters

most, not the brand name. **Fiberon typically runs \$10-14 per square foot for materials compared to Trex at \$12-16 per square foot** — a meaningful savings on a 300-square-foot deck project.

For Calgary specifically, Fiberon performs exceptionally well against our two biggest deck challenges: **chinook freeze-thaw cycling and extreme UV exposure at 1,045 metres elevation**. The polymer cap prevents moisture infiltration during rapid temperature swings, while UV stabilizers in the cap layer resist the intense solar radiation that turns unprotected wood grey within one season. Fiberon's lighter color options (driftwood, coastal bluff, castle gray) show less fading over time than darker colors, just like any composite brand. The material handles Calgary's dry climate without the shrinkage, checking, and splitting that plague pressure-treated lumber as it dries from its initial high moisture content.

**Installation requirements are identical to Trex** — hidden fastener systems, proper gapping for thermal expansion, and manufacturer-specified composite screws if face-fastening. Fiberon decking requires the same substructure as any composite: joists 16 inches on center maximum, proper ventilation underneath, and galvanized or stainless steel framing hardware rated for Calgary's moisture cycling. The 25-year warranty coverage is comparable to other major composite brands.

**Where Fiberon saves money without sacrificing performance:** material cost is lower due to less marketing spend compared to Trex, the product line is simpler with fewer premium options, and many Calgary deck contractors are familiar with the installation requirements. A typical 300-square-foot Fiberon deck runs \$12,000-\$18,000 fully installed compared to \$13,500-\$21,000 for equivalent Trex lines — a potential savings of \$1,500-\$3,000 on a mid-sized project.

**The main trade-offs are aesthetic variety and resale recognition.** Trex offers more color options, deeper wood grain textures, and stronger brand recognition among homeowners. If you're planning to sell within 5-7 years, Trex may have slightly better market recognition. For long-term homeowners focused on performance and value, Fiberon delivers the same low-maintenance durability at a better price point.

**Calgary contractors generally stock both brands** and can source either without delays during the May-October building season. Both handle our hailstorms better than cedar, require virtually no maintenance beyond annual cleaning, and will outlast any wood deck in Calgary's climate by decades.

Need help finding a deck contractor familiar with Fiberon installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced composite decking professionals for free estimates on your project.

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**Looking for experienced contractors?** The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- Durable Decks
- New Earth Waste Services Ltd
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Q15

## Do I still need to seal or stain composite decking in Calgary or is it truly maintenance-free?

**Composite decking is low-maintenance, not maintenance-free — you don't need to stain or seal it, but it still requires periodic cleaning to look its best and maintain warranty coverage.**

Modern capped composite decking (Trex Transcend, TimberTech AZEK, Fiberon Paramount) has a protective polymer shell that resists UV fading, moisture penetration, and staining without any applied finishes. Unlike wood decking that requires staining every 1-2 years in Calgary's intense UV and chinook cycling, composite maintains its colour and structural integrity without sealers or stains. The capped surface is designed to weather naturally while protecting the core material from moisture and temperature cycling.

However, **composite decking does require regular cleaning** to prevent organic buildup, remove surface dirt, and address any staining from leaves, food spills, or environmental debris. Calgary's dry climate means less mildew growth than humid regions, but dust, pollen, and organic matter still accumulate. Most manufacturers require annual cleaning to maintain warranty coverage — typically with soap and water or a composite deck cleaner. Power washing is acceptable but should be done with a fan tip and moderate pressure to avoid damaging the surface texture.

**Calgary's extreme climate affects composite differently than wood.** Chinook temperature swings don't cause composite to crack, split, or warp like wood, but they can cause slight expansion and contraction. The UV exposure at Calgary's 1,045-metre elevation will cause some colour fading over time, particularly in darker shades, but this happens gradually over 10-15 years rather than the rapid silvering you see with untreated cedar in one season. Hailstorms may dent softer composite products, though most modern capped composites are quite resilient.

**Maintenance schedule for composite in Calgary:** Annual cleaning with soap and water or composite deck cleaner, immediate cleanup of food spills and organic debris, quarterly inspection for loose fasteners or damaged

boards, and occasional deeper cleaning with a composite-specific cleaner if staining occurs. This represents about 2-3 hours of maintenance per year versus 8-12 hours annually for a wood deck that requires stripping, sanding, and re-staining.

**When to hire a pro:** Composite cleaning is definitely DIY-friendly. However, if you notice structural issues like loose boards, popped fasteners, or deck movement, contact a deck professional. Composite deck repairs often require manufacturer-specific replacement parts and fastener systems.

Need help finding a deck builder for composite installation or repairs? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced composite specialists from the Calgary Construction Network.

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- Mayken Hazmat Solutions LTD
- Royland Stucco
- Venkor Group Inc
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## Does composite decking get too hot to walk on barefoot in Calgary summers and is there a way to reduce heat?

**Yes, composite decking can get uncomfortably hot for barefoot walking during Calgary's peak summer days, but there are several effective ways to reduce surface temperatures.**

Composite decking absorbs and retains more heat than natural wood because of its density and plastic content. On a sunny 30°C Calgary afternoon, darker composite boards can reach surface temperatures of 50-65°C — hot enough to cause discomfort or even minor burns on bare feet. This is particularly noticeable in Calgary due to our intense UV exposure at 1,045 metres elevation and the long daylight hours during summer months. However, composite decking cools down much faster than concrete or stone once the sun moves or clouds provide shade.

**Color choice makes the biggest difference in surface temperature.** Light-colored composite decking (greys, tans, light browns) stays 10-15°C cooler than dark colors (deep browns, charcoals, blacks) under identical conditions. If you're planning a new composite deck and expect significant barefoot use, choose lighter shades from manufacturers like Trex (Gravel Path, Foggy Wharf), TimberTech (Silver Maple, Coastland), or Fiberon (Ipe, Castle Gray). The trade-off is that lighter colors may show dirt and staining more readily than darker tones.

**Capped composite decking runs cooler than uncapped versions** because the protective polymer shell reflects more heat than exposed wood fiber cores. Premium lines like Trex Transcend, TimberTech AZEK, and Fiberon Paramount all feature heat-reducing cap technology. Some manufacturers now offer specific "cool deck" formulations — Trex Transcend Lineage and TimberTech AZEK Vintage Collection use advanced polymer blends that stay noticeably cooler underfoot.

**Shade structures are the most effective heat reduction strategy.** A pergola, awning, or shade sail over your deck can reduce surface temperatures by 15-20°C even on the hottest days. In Calgary's climate, partial shade also protects the decking from UV degradation and extends its lifespan. Consider a pergola with adjustable louvers or retractable shade cloth for flexibility between sun and shade throughout the day.

**Strategic deck orientation and design help manage heat buildup.** If possible, position your deck to receive morning and evening sun but avoid the intense midday exposure from 11 AM to 4 PM. Multi-level decks allow you to create shaded lower areas under elevated sections. Adding deck skirting with ventilation gaps improves airflow underneath, helping heat dissipate rather than building up in the substructure.

**PVC decking like AZEK or TimberTech Advanced PVC runs significantly cooler than composite** because it contains no wood fibers and uses different polymer chemistry. PVC decking typically stays 5-10°C cooler than composite under identical conditions, making it the best choice for hot tub areas, pool decks, or any application

where barefoot comfort is a priority. The trade-off is higher material cost — expect to pay \$12-20 per square foot for PVC versus \$10-18 for composite.

**Practical cooling strategies for existing composite decks** include hosing down the surface before use (the water evaporates quickly in Calgary's dry air), installing outdoor rugs or interlocking deck tiles in high-traffic areas, and using deck furniture to create shaded pathways. Some homeowners install misting systems, though these are less effective in Calgary's low humidity compared to more humid climates.

**Timing your deck use makes a difference too.** Composite decking is most comfortable for barefoot use in early morning, late afternoon, and evening hours. During peak heat (noon to 4 PM), the deck surface will be hottest regardless of color or brand. Calgary's long summer daylight hours mean you have plenty of comfortable deck time outside the peak heat window.

When planning a composite deck in Calgary, factor heat management into your design from the start. The long-term benefits of composite — no staining, no splinters, resistance to chinook freeze-thaw cycling, and 25-year warranties — often outweigh the summer heat consideration, especially with proper color selection and shade planning.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with heat-reducing composite options? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors familiar with the latest cool-deck technologies and shade structure integration.

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- Mike's Restoration Service
- Radon Lab

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**Q17**

**Can I install composite decking myself in Calgary or is it better to hire a professional for the warranty coverage?**

**You can absolutely install composite decking yourself in Calgary, and DIY installation typically does NOT void the manufacturer's warranty** — most major brands like Trex, TimberTech, and Fiberon cover material defects regardless of who installs the product. However, the structural work underneath (footings, framing, ledger attachment) should be done by professionals for any deck over 24 inches above grade.

**Composite decking is actually more DIY-friendly than wood** because the boards are dimensionally stable, don't require pre-drilling, and use hidden fastener systems that create clean, professional-looking results. The material doesn't shrink, warp, or split like pressure-treated lumber, so your installation will look the same in five years as it does on day one. Calgary's dry climate is ideal for composite — no moisture-related expansion and contraction issues that plague wood decks.

**The key warranty consideration isn't who installs it, but HOW it's installed.** Composite manufacturers require specific fastener systems, proper joist spacing (typically 12 or 16 inches on center), adequate ventilation underneath, and correct expansion gaps at the ends. Using the wrong screws, exceeding span limits, or blocking airflow can void coverage. Most manufacturers provide detailed installation guides, and following these exactly protects your warranty whether you're a homeowner or contractor.

**Calgary's extreme climate actually makes proper installation more critical than in milder regions.** Chinook temperature swings from -25°C to +10°C in hours create expansion and contraction cycles that stress every connection point. Use only manufacturer-approved hidden fasteners or composite screws — never standard wood screws, which will mushroom the material and void your warranty. Leave the recommended expansion gaps at board ends (typically 6mm) to accommodate thermal movement.

**What you should definitely hire professionals for:** Any deck over 600mm (24 inches) above grade requires a building permit and professional construction for the substructure. Footings must reach 4 feet below grade in Calgary — no exceptions. The ledger board attachment to your house is the most critical structural connection and the leading failure point in deck collapses. Framing, beam spans, and joist spacing must meet Alberta Building Code requirements. These are not DIY tasks.

**What's perfect for DIY:** Installing composite decking boards and railings on a professionally-built frame. The hidden fastener systems (like Trex Hideaway or TimberTech CONCEALoc) are designed for homeowner installation. You'll need a circular saw with a fine-tooth blade, drill, chalk line, and measuring tape. Most homeowners can deck a 200-300 square foot area in a weekend once the framing is complete.

**Calgary-specific installation tips:** Work during stable weather — avoid installation during chinook events when temperatures are rapidly changing. Composite boards can be slippery when wet, so wait for dry conditions. Darker colours get very hot in Calgary's intense summer sun, so consider lighter shades if the deck gets full sun exposure. Store boards flat and supported to prevent sagging before installation.

**Cost comparison:** Professional composite deck installation runs \$40-70 per square foot in Calgary. DIY composite over a professionally-built frame saves roughly \$15-25 per square foot on labour while maintaining full warranty coverage. A typical 300-square-foot deck saves \$4,500-\$7,500 in labour costs with DIY decking installation.

Need help finding a deck contractor for the structural work? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with experienced framing professionals who work with DIY homeowners on the finishing phases.

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Q18

## **Are there any composite decking products made in Alberta that would save on shipping costs for a Calgary project?**

**While there are no major composite decking manufacturers with production facilities in Alberta, several strategies can help Calgary homeowners minimize shipping costs and support more local supply chains.**

The composite decking industry is dominated by large manufacturers like Trex (Virginia), TimberTech (Ohio), and Fiberon (North Carolina), with most production concentrated in the eastern United States where the technology was first developed. These companies ship their products to Canadian distributors, typically through major hubs in Toronto, Vancouver, or Winnipeg, then distribute to local lumber yards and building supply stores across Alberta.

**Local sourcing strategies focus on finding Alberta-based distributors and suppliers rather than Alberta-made products.** Several Calgary-area lumber yards and building supply companies stock composite decking year-round, which means the shipping costs are already built into their wholesale pricing rather than being passed directly to homeowners as freight charges. Home Depot, Lowe's, and independent lumber yards like Windsor Plywood typically maintain inventory of popular composite lines, so you're buying from local stock rather than

special-ordering from distant warehouses.

**The most significant cost savings come from timing your purchase during spring pre-season sales** when suppliers are clearing winter inventory and preparing for the building season. Many Calgary suppliers offer 10-15% discounts on composite decking in March and April, which often exceeds any potential shipping savings from hypothetical local production. Calgary's short building season (May through October) creates predictable inventory cycles that savvy homeowners can leverage.

**Calgary's position as a transportation hub actually works in your favor for composite decking costs.** The city sits at the intersection of major rail and trucking routes, making it a natural distribution point for building materials heading to smaller Alberta communities. This means Calgary often has better composite decking availability and competitive pricing compared to smaller centers like Red Deer or Medicine Hat, where special orders and freight charges are more common.

**Consider the total project cost rather than just material shipping.** A typical 300-square-foot composite deck uses \$3,000-\$5,400 in materials. Even if you could save 5-10% on shipping costs through hypothetical local production, that's only \$150-\$540 in savings on a \$12,000-\$21,000 installed project. Focus instead on getting competitive bids from multiple contractors, timing your project during slower periods (early May or late September), and choosing composite lines that offer the best performance-to-price ratio for Calgary's extreme climate.

**For the most cost-effective composite decking in Calgary,** work with contractors who maintain relationships with local suppliers and can source materials efficiently. Many experienced deck builders buy composite decking in bulk during off-season sales and pass some of those savings to homeowners. The Calgary Construction Network can connect you with contractors who understand local supply chains and can help optimize both material and labor costs for your specific project timeline.

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- WestAim Construction Ltd.
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc

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## Will composite decking crack or warp during Calgary chinooks when the temperature swings 20 degrees in a few hours?

**Modern composite decking is specifically engineered to handle Calgary's extreme chinook temperature swings without cracking or warping.** Unlike wood, which expands and contracts significantly with temperature changes, quality composite materials are dimensionally stable and designed for thermal cycling.

**Composite decking's thermal performance** makes it ideal for Calgary's chinook conditions. Materials like Trex, TimberTech, and Fiberon are manufactured with a blend of wood fibers and plastic polymers that expand and contract at much lower rates than natural wood. When temperatures swing from -25°C to +5°C during a chinook event, composite boards will expand slightly lengthwise (typically 3-6mm over a 12-foot board), but this movement is predictable and manageable with proper installation techniques.

**Proper installation prevents thermal stress issues.** Professional deck builders in Calgary leave appropriate expansion gaps at the ends of composite boards — typically 6-8mm against fixed structures like house walls or posts. This allows the material to expand and contract freely without buckling or creating stress points. The boards are also fastened with hidden clip systems or screws placed in pre-drilled holes that allow for this thermal movement. When installed correctly, composite decking rides out chinook cycles without any structural stress.

**Calgary's freeze-thaw cycling actually favors composite over wood.** While chinooks cause wood deck boards to repeatedly freeze, thaw, absorb moisture, and dry out — leading to checking, splitting, and warping — composite materials don't absorb water and aren't affected by moisture cycling. The rapid temperature changes that pop fasteners in wood decking and cause end grain splitting have minimal impact on properly installed composite systems.

**Capped composite decking offers the best performance** in Calgary's extreme conditions. Premium lines like Trex Transcend and TimberTech Advanced PVC feature a protective polymer shell that completely encases the wood-fiber core. This cap layer prevents moisture infiltration, UV damage, and thermal stress cracking. These materials carry 25-year to lifetime warranties specifically because they're engineered for extreme climate cycling.

**Installation timing matters for optimal performance.** Composite decking should ideally be installed when temperatures are moderate (10-20°C) to minimize the initial thermal stress. Installing during extreme cold or heat can create unnecessary expansion or contraction stress right from the start. Most Calgary deck builders schedule composite installations for late spring through early fall when temperatures are stable.

**Quality matters significantly in Calgary's climate.** First-generation composite products from the early 2000s were prone to thermal cracking and expansion issues, but modern capped composites have solved these problems

through improved polymer chemistry and manufacturing processes. Stick with established brands that offer substantial warranties and have proven performance in Canadian climates. Budget composite products may still experience thermal stress issues, so investing in quality materials pays off in Calgary's demanding conditions.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installation? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with professionals who understand proper thermal expansion techniques for Calgary's chinook cycles.

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Q20

## How much weight can composite decking support for a hot tub installation on a Calgary deck?

**Composite decking itself can typically support 40-50 pounds per square foot, but a hot tub weighs 1,500-2,500 kilograms when full — the real issue is whether your deck's substructure (joists, beams, and footings) can handle this concentrated load, which requires professional engineering in Calgary.**

The decking material is only the surface layer. What matters for hot tub support is the underlying structural framework. A standard residential deck is typically designed for 40 pounds per square foot of live load (people, furniture, snow), but a hot tub creates a concentrated load of 150-300 pounds per square foot in a small area. This exceeds normal deck design loads by 4-8 times.

**Structural requirements for hot tub decks in Calgary** go beyond just the decking material. The joists under the hot tub area typically need to be upgraded to 2x10 or 2x12 lumber on 12-inch centers (instead of the standard 16-inch spacing). The beam supporting those joists may need to be doubled or tripled, and the footings supporting that beam must be sized for the additional load. In Calgary's climate, these footings still must extend 4 feet below grade

to prevent frost heave, but they also need to be larger in diameter — typically 12-16 inches instead of the standard 8-10 inches.

**Calgary's extreme freeze-thaw cycling from chinook winds** adds another layer of complexity. The repeated expansion and contraction stresses every connection point on the deck. A hot tub's weight amplifies these stresses, making proper fastener selection and connection details even more critical. Galvanized or stainless steel hardware is essential, and all connections should be over-engineered for the cycling loads.

**Most existing decks cannot support a hot tub without structural modifications.** Even if your deck appears solid, it was likely designed for standard residential loads, not concentrated equipment loads. Adding a hot tub to an unmodified deck can cause sagging, bouncing, or in extreme cases, structural failure. The deck may seem fine initially but develop problems over months or years as the sustained load causes creep in the lumber and loosening of connections.

**Professional engineering is required for hot tub deck installations** over 600mm above grade in Calgary. A structural engineer will calculate the loads, specify the required joist sizing and spacing, beam requirements, and footing upgrades. This typically costs \$800-\$2,000 for the engineering, but it ensures safety and may be required for insurance coverage. The actual structural modifications can range from \$2,000-\$8,000 depending on how much of the existing deck needs reinforcement.

**Composite decking performs well under hot tubs** because it won't rot from splashed water and handles Calgary's moisture cycling better than wood. However, some composite products can soften slightly under sustained heat and load. Check with the manufacturer about hot tub compatibility — most premium capped composites (Trex Transcend, TimberTech Legacy) are rated for hot tub installations when properly supported.

**When to hire a professional:** Any hot tub installation on an elevated deck requires a structural engineer and experienced deck contractor. The engineering ensures the deck can safely support the load, and professional installation ensures proper waterproofing, electrical connections (hot tubs require 220V service), and structural modifications. This is not a DIY project — the safety and liability risks are too high.

Find structural engineers and deck contractors experienced with hot tub installations through the Calgary Construction Network at [calgaryconstructionnetwork.com](http://calgaryconstructionnetwork.com).

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- Quality count construction Ltd.

- Greenstone landscaping solutions
- BOND CONTRACTING & CONSTRUCTION INC
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## What is the price difference between capped composite and uncapped composite decking installed in Calgary?

**Capped composite decking costs approximately \$5-12 more per square foot installed than uncapped composite in Calgary, with capped running \$45-70/sqft versus uncapped at \$40-58/sqft.** The price difference reflects the superior performance and longer warranties that come with the protective polymer shell on capped products.

**Capped composite decking features a protective polymer cap** that completely encases the wood-fiber composite core. This cap provides enhanced stain resistance, fade protection, and moisture barrier compared to uncapped composite, which has the raw composite material exposed on all surfaces. In Calgary's intense UV environment at 1,045 metres elevation, this cap makes a significant difference in long-term appearance and performance.

**The material cost difference is typically \$3-6 per square foot** between comparable product lines. For example, TimberTech's uncapped Edge Collection runs \$12-15/sqft for materials, while their capped Azek Vintage Collection runs \$16-20/sqft. Trex's uncapped Select line costs \$10-13/sqft versus their capped Transcend line at \$14-18/sqft. Labour costs remain similar since installation methods are identical, adding the same \$25-35/sqft for professional installation including substructure.

**Calgary's extreme climate conditions make the capped upgrade particularly worthwhile.** The city's chinook wind cycles create rapid temperature swings that can stress uncapped composite surfaces, potentially leading to moisture infiltration and expansion issues. Calgary's exceptional UV exposure at elevation will fade uncapped composite more rapidly than capped versions with UV-stabilized caps. Additionally, Calgary's frequent hailstorms can damage the surface of uncapped composite, while capped products generally resist hail impact better due to their harder protective shell.

**Performance differences justify the cost premium for most Calgary homeowners.** Capped composite typically carries 25-30 year fade and stain warranties compared to 10-15 years for uncapped products. The superior stain

resistance means spilled wine, barbecue sauce, or leaf tannins won't permanently mark capped surfaces. Capped products also clean more easily and maintain their original colour longer in Calgary's intense sun.

**For a typical 300-square-foot deck, expect to pay \$1,500-\$3,600 more for capped composite** over uncapped when professionally installed. While this represents a significant upfront investment, the extended warranty coverage, reduced maintenance requirements, and better long-term appearance retention make capped composite the preferred choice for most Calgary deck projects where composite is being considered.

**Consider uncapped composite only if budget is the primary concern** and you're comfortable with more frequent cleaning and potential earlier replacement. For Calgary's challenging climate, the capped upgrade typically proves worthwhile for the enhanced durability and peace of mind it provides over the deck's 20-30 year lifespan.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with composite installations? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors familiar with both capped and uncapped product lines for free estimates on your project.

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## What is the best composite decking option for a Calgary condo rooftop deck that gets full sun exposure?

**For a Calgary rooftop deck with full sun exposure, TimberTech Advanced PVC or Azek Vintage Collection are your best options, followed closely by premium capped composite lines like Trex Transcend or TimberTech Legacy in lighter colours.**

Rooftop decks in Calgary face the most extreme conditions possible — intense UV at 1,045 metres elevation, chinook temperature swings from -25°C to +10°C in hours, no shade protection, and direct exposure to hail. The decking material you choose needs to handle all of this while staying comfortable underfoot during Calgary's hot summer days when rooftop temperatures can exceed 40°C.

**PVC decking is the premium choice for rooftop applications.** TimberTech Advanced PVC and Azek products are 100% synthetic, meaning they won't absorb moisture, expand and contract with chinooks, or degrade under Calgary's extreme UV. More importantly, PVC stays significantly cooler underfoot than composite or wood — a critical factor when you're walking barefoot on a rooftop in July. PVC is also the most hail-resistant decking material available, with enough flexibility to absorb impact without cracking. Expect to pay \$12-20 per square foot for materials, but you'll get a lifetime warranty and virtually zero maintenance.

**If PVC exceeds your budget, choose a premium capped composite in light colours.** Trex Transcend, TimberTech Legacy, or Fiberon Paramount lines all feature a protective polymer shell that resists UV fading and moisture absorption. The key for rooftop applications is colour selection — choose the lightest available shade (greys, tans, or light browns) to minimize heat absorption. Dark composite colours can become uncomfortably hot to walk on and may exceed manufacturer temperature ratings on a Calgary rooftop. These premium composites cost \$10-18 per square foot for materials and carry 25-year fade warranties.

**Avoid first-generation composites and any wood products for rooftop applications.** Uncapped composites will fade rapidly under Calgary's intense UV, and wood will check, split, and require annual maintenance that's difficult to perform on a rooftop. Cedar might seem appealing, but it becomes a maintenance nightmare when you need to haul staining equipment up to a condo rooftop every 1-2 years.

**Special considerations for condo rooftop decks include weight restrictions, wind uplift, and drainage.** Most condo buildings have structural load limits for rooftop installations — verify the maximum load capacity with your condo board and building engineer before proceeding. PVC decking is lighter than composite, which may be advantageous. The deck structure must be engineered for wind uplift at height, and proper drainage is critical since water has nowhere to go except through the roof membrane. Consider a pedestal system that allows water to flow underneath the decking.

**Installation timing is crucial for rooftop projects.** Calgary's short building season (May through October) is even more compressed for rooftop work due to wind and weather exposure. Book your contractor by March for summer installation, and ensure they have experience with elevated installations and the equipment needed to transport materials to your rooftop safely.

Need help finding a deck builder experienced with rooftop installations? Calgary Deck Contractors can match you with contractors who specialize in elevated and challenging deck projects through the Calgary Construction Network.

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## Can composite decking be installed over existing wood deck joists in Calgary or do I need a whole new frame?

**In most cases, composite decking can be installed over existing wood joists in Calgary, provided the substructure is sound and meets current spacing requirements.** This is often a cost-effective way to upgrade from deteriorated wood decking while keeping the existing frame intact.

### Evaluating Your Existing Joist System

The key is thoroughly inspecting your current substructure before committing to a decking-only replacement. Check for **structural soundness** — look for sagging, bouncing, or any joists showing rot, insect damage, or stress cracks. In Calgary's climate, pay special attention to joist tops where snow and moisture accumulate, and end grain cuts that may have absorbed moisture during chinook cycles. Any compromised joists need replacement before installing new decking.

**Joist spacing requirements** are critical for composite decking. Most composite manufacturers require 16-inch on-center joist spacing, though some premium lines allow 24-inch spacing. If your existing joists are spaced at 24 inches and you're installing standard composite decking, you'll need to add blocking or sister joists to achieve 16-inch spacing. Measure carefully — older Calgary decks sometimes have irregular spacing that doesn't meet current standards.

**Ledger board condition** deserves special attention since this is the most critical structural connection. Check that the ledger is properly flashed, securely fastened to the house, and shows no signs of rot or water damage. Calgary's chinook freeze-thaw cycles are particularly hard on ledger connections, and this isn't the time to discover problems. If there's any question about ledger integrity, address it before installing expensive composite decking.

### **Calgary Climate Considerations**

Your existing frame has already proven it can handle Calgary's extreme conditions — chinook cycling, heavy snow loads, and deep frost penetration. If the structure is sound, there's no need to rebuild what's working. However, **check all fasteners and connections** for loosening due to freeze-thaw movement. Calgary's temperature swings cause more fastener movement than in stable climates, so tighten any loose bolts or screws before proceeding.

The **existing rim joists and blocking** should be inspected for moisture damage, particularly where they meet the house. Calgary's dry climate actually helps preserve wood substructure compared to more humid regions, but areas where snow accumulates or drainage is poor may show deterioration.

### **Installation Requirements**

Composite decking requires **manufacturer-approved fastening systems** — typically hidden fasteners or color-matched composite screws. Never use standard wood screws, which will mushroom the composite material and void your warranty. The existing joist tops should be clean and level for proper fastener engagement.

**Budget approximately \$10-18 per square foot for composite decking materials** plus \$5-8 per square foot for installation labor if hiring professionals. This compares to \$25-45 per square foot for a complete deck rebuild with pressure-treated lumber, or \$40-70 per square foot for a full composite deck with new framing.

### **When New Framing Is Required**

You'll need new framing if the existing joists are structurally compromised, spaced too wide for your chosen composite product, or if you're significantly changing the deck layout. Also, if you're adding features like built-in planters, benches, or hot tub support, the existing frame likely won't have adequate load capacity and will require engineering upgrades.

### **Professional Assessment Recommended**

While experienced DIYers can evaluate obvious structural problems, having a deck contractor assess the existing frame provides peace of mind before investing in premium composite materials. Calgary Deck Contractors can connect you with professionals who can evaluate your substructure and recommend whether a decking-only replacement makes sense for your specific situation.

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