

HOME, LAWN & GARDEN

Just how safe is your patio deck?

It's the time of year when Canadians throw open their doors and step onto their patio decks for another season of outdoor entertaining and family barbecues.

It's also the time when smart homeowners dedicate a few crucial moments to ensuring that their decks are safe because every year, deck collapses in backyards across North America continue to cause serious injuries and fatalities.

The North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA) a trade organization of deck manufacturers, dealers and builders, estimates that 40 million or more decks in North America are more than 20 years old.

Some homeowners are avoiding deck repairs and failure by turning to new 'high tech' deck systems that are maintenance free, such as the Canadian-made SigmaDek system featuring aerospace aluminum and porcelain components that will not wear out.

As part of NADRA's annual "Check Your Deck" public awareness campaign, they offer homeowners this checklist for patio deck safety:

- Examine all areas of your deck for split or decaying wood, particularly where the deck attaches to the house, near the railings and stairs, and all support posts beneath the deck surface where moisture accumulates;
- Fasteners such as nails, screws or anchors

used during installation can come loose over time. Check to ensure firm connections and repair as needed;

- Railings and banisters can get loose and become particularly dangerous due to wear and tear over time. Test them to ensure they are firmly in place;

- Examine stairs to ensure each step is solidly in place;

- Wood deck coatings are durable but they can wear over time, particularly with the typical extremes of cold and heat in Canada. Examine deck boards for a consistent surface and renew waterproof coating or paint as needed for ongoing protection from the elements;

- Check all deck lighting to ensure light covers are not in contact with anything and examine all wiring and electrical cords being used outdoors to ensure a safe connection. Cords that become loose can also present a tripping hazard so check for proper placement as well;

- Even safe decks face the risk of damage or collapsing if nearby trees have large limbs that overhang the deck area. Be sure there is no danger to your deck in the event that they break off unexpectedly during a storm or due to age and decay.

For more deck safety tips and information visit www.sigmadek.com

www.newscanada.com

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