DECK BUILDERS OTTAWA

Materials & Boards

Pressure-treated, cedar, composite and PVC decking: treated wood types, warranty terms versus lifespan, and the material report Ottawa asks for

6 Expert Answers from Deck IQ

deckbuildersottawa.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Treated wood in ground contact on an Ottawa deck?
2. Composite deck maintenance for Ottawa winters?
3. Cedar versus pressure-treated for a deck in Ottawa weather?
4. Capped composite versus old composite boards in Ontario?
5. Was my pre-2004 Ottawa deck built with CCA lumber?
6. Do composite warranties cover fading on Ottawa decks?

Q1

Treated wood in ground contact on an Ottawa deck?

For posts and components that go into the ground, the 2024 Ontario Building Code says to use preservative-treated wood or the dark heartwood of a naturally durable species. That is the Code's own wording, and it applies to any deck post or structural member in ground contact.

Health Canada identifies the two treatments available for residential construction today as Alkaline Copper Quaternary (ACQ) and Copper Azole (CA-B). Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) is no longer available for residential projects. If your property has an older deck built before 2004, Health Canada says it is likely to have been made from CCA-treated lumber.

When you are working with ACQ or CA-B lumber, Health Canada recommends wearing a dust mask, eye protection, gloves and long sleeves when sawing or sanding, and says never to burn treated wood indoors or outdoors.

A few things shape how this applies to your specific deck. Whether a post sits in direct ground contact or on a concrete footing above grade changes what the Code requires of it. Where the soil is filled ground, peat or sensitive clay, including Leda clay, the 2024 Ontario Building Code requires an engineered foundation design under Section 4.2 rather than the standard prescriptive footing rules. A builder or engineer can tell you whether that applies to your lot. Before any digging starts, Ontario law requires a locate request through Ontario One Call at least five business days in advance; the request is free, and it covers both public utilities and any private lines you arrange to have marked yourself.

If the deck needs a permit, the City of Ottawa's permit drawings must show the footing or foundation type, size and location, and the post sizes and spacing. The City lists three inspection stages: excavation and foundations before backfill, framing at completion of structural framing and guards, and a final inspection. The homeowner or builder books each inspection 48 hours in advance.

On the finish side, the USDA Forest Products Laboratory notes that copper waterborne treatments may keep a brown colour for about two years. For above-ground decking boards, the FPL says the service lives of naturally durable and preservative-treated woods are quite comparable, and that splitting and checking, not decay, is the most common reason treated decks are replaced. Keeping water beading on the surface rather than soaking in is the best way to slow that process.

When you set two written quotes side by side for this job, look at what each one specifies for the foundation type and depth, the board species and treatment, the guard and stair details, and whether removal of an existing deck is included or priced separately.

Q2

Composite deck maintenance for Ottawa winters?

For composite decking, follow the manufacturer's care guide: we found no neutral cleaning or upkeep interval that applies across products, and care requirements vary by brand and product line.

That said, a few things are consistent across Ottawa winters and worth knowing before you plan your maintenance schedule.

Snow and ice removal is the winter job to plan for. Check the manufacturer's guide for which shovels, scrapers and de-icing products it allows on your boards before the first snowfall.

Composite boards do not need staining, sealing or painting the way wood does. The FPL's finish intervals and penetrating-versus-film-finish guidance apply to wood; none of it carries over to composite or PVC. Do not apply a deck stain or water-repellent product to composite boards unless the manufacturer specifically says to.

Debris collects between boards, in the gaps around posts and at the ledger. Check the manufacturer's guide for how and when to clear it out. Beyond that, follow whatever cleaning method and frequency the guide sets out for your specific product.

On the permit side: if you are replacing existing composite boards on existing framing, we found no City of Ottawa statement on whether that requires a permit, so ask the City's Building Code Services before starting. If the project involves any structural work, a new deck or a replacement of the whole deck, the permit rules apply, and where the decking is other than conventional lumber the permit application needs a material testing report (CCMC or BMEC).

Manufacturers publish warranty terms on composite lines: 25- and 30-year limited product warranties and matching fade and stain warranties are common, with some PVC lines offering a lifetime limited product warranty and a 50-year fade and stain warranty. Read the full warranty document, because what the manufacturer's care guide requires will affect whether a warranty claim is valid.

When you get quotes for composite decking work, ask each builder to show you exactly which line items are included in the price, because some published packages exclude railings, stairs, removal of an old deck, permit drawings and the foundation.

Q3

Cedar versus pressure-treated for a deck in Ottawa weather?

Pressure-treated starts lower on published Ottawa and Ontario builder prices: about about $25 to $65 per square foot installed, while cedar runs about $45 to $80 per square foot installed. Those are wide ranges, and quotes differ on what the rest of the deck involves.

What the materials actually do differently

The USDA Forest Products Laboratory notes that the service lives of naturally durable and preservative-treated woods are quite comparable in above-ground uses such as decking boards. The FPL adds that the most common reason treated decks are removed is splitting and checking, not decay, and the best way to slow that is to keep water beading on the surface rather than soaking in. For posts and components in ground contact, the Forest Products Laboratory recommends preservative-treated wood or the dark heartwood of a naturally durable species.

On finishes, the Forest Products Laboratory's US figures recommend penetrating finishes over film-forming ones on decking. A semitransparent stain lasts about 2 to 3 years on new boards and 3 to 6 years on weathered or saw-textured boards. A water-repellent preservative lasts about 1 to 2 years. Paint and solid stain are rated low suitability for decking. Health Canada notes that residential treated wood may be Alkaline Copper Quaternary or Copper Azole; Chromated Copper Arsenate is no longer available for residential construction. When cutting or sanding treated lumber, wear a dust mask, eye protection, gloves and long sleeves, and never burn it indoors or outdoors.

A few things to ask about and confirm with any quote:

- What species and grade of cedar, or which treated lumber, is being priced
- Whether the quote includes the framing and posts or only the decking boards
- Whether railings and stairs are included, as some published packages exclude them
- What finish, if any, is included, and who applies it

On permits: if your deck needs a building permit, and the City of Ottawa's rules require one for any deck attached to the house with a walking surface more than 600 mm (24 in.) above adjacent grade, the permit application must include scaled drawings showing the framing, foundation, elevations and the deck-to-house connection. If the decking is other than conventional lumber, the City also requires a material testing report, either CCMC or BMEC. Ask the City if you are unsure whether your boards count as conventional lumber. The City lists three inspections: excavation and foundations before backfill, framing at completion of structural framing and guards, and a final inspection. Book each one 48 hours in advance.
Before any digging for footings, whoever is doing the work must submit a locate request through Ontario One Call at least 5 business days before breaking ground. It is free and required by the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012.

Make sure the contract names who applies for the permit and who books each of the three City inspections.

Q4

Capped composite versus old composite boards in Ontario?

Capped composite (a wood-plastic core wrapped in a polymer shell) and older uncapped composite (wood fibre and plastic blended through, no shell) are both sold as composite decking, and what you can compare is what each manufacturer publishes. Manufacturers of capped composite lines publish 25- and 30-year limited product warranties alongside fade and stain warranties. We found no neutral source on uncapped boards' warranties or lifespan. Read the full warranty document before choosing, because what it covers and what it excludes is in the fine print, not the headline number.

For a permit application in Ottawa, the rule is the same for both: where the proposed decking is other than conventional lumber, the City of Ottawa requires a material testing report, either a CCMC or BMEC evaluation, submitted with the permit application. That applies whether the boards are capped or uncapped composite. Confirm that the product you are considering has a current evaluation report before you buy.

What else shapes the decision

The 2024 Ontario Building Code sets the structural loads the deck frame must carry, not the board surface. The decking material you choose does not change the footing depth, the guard height requirements, or the stair rise and run rules. Those are fixed by the Code regardless of what sits on top of the joists.

On care and upkeep, follow the manufacturer's care guide for the specific product; we found no neutral cleaning interval for composite decking.

A few things to confirm with any builder quoting composite work:

- Which product they are pricing, and whether it has a current CCMC or BMEC evaluation
- Whether the quote includes the material testing report for the permit application, or whether that is extra
- Whether railings and steps are included, because some published packages exclude them

Published Ottawa and Ontario builder prices for composite decking, installed, run about $45 to $95 per square foot, read in September 2026. The spread is wide, and quotes can differ on the board line, height, stairs, railing type and whether removal of an existing deck is included.
Confirm in the contract who applies for the City of Ottawa building permit and who books the three required inspections, which are the excavation or foundations inspection, the framing inspection and the final inspection.

Q5

Was my pre-2004 Ottawa deck built with CCA lumber?

If your Ottawa deck was built before 2004, Health Canada says it is likely to have been made from CCA-treated lumber, which stands for Chromated Copper Arsenate. There is no way to know for certain just by looking at it, but the pre-2004 date is the clearest indicator Health Canada gives.

CCA is no longer available for residential construction projects in Canada. The treatments used today are Alkaline Copper Quaternary (ACQ) or Copper Azole (CA-B).

What this means for your deck day to day

Health Canada has a few practical points worth knowing. Never burn CCA-treated wood, indoors or outdoors. When you saw or sand it, wear a dust mask, eye protection, gloves and long sleeves. For an older CCA deck that is still structurally sound, Health Canada suggests applying a sealant every year using an oil- or water-based stain. Paints and other film-forming finishes are not recommended on decking, and that applies here too.

The USDA Forest Products Laboratory notes that the most common reason preservative-treated decks get replaced is splitting and checking, not decay. Keeping water beading on the surface rather than soaking in is the best way to slow that process. A water-repellent preservative lasts about one to two years. Semitransparent stain lasts two to three years on new boards and three to six years on weathered ones. Both are US Forest Products Laboratory figures.

If you are thinking about replacing the boards or doing any structural work, the scope of that project will determine whether a permit is needed. The City of Ottawa requires a permit if the deck's walking surface is more than 600 mm (24 in.) above adjacent grade and the deck is attached to the house, or if it is an elevated deck providing principal access to the building. A deck under 600 mm that is not a main entrance and not on a designated heritage property may not need a permit, but the 2024 Ontario Building Code and the City's zoning by-laws still apply to the work.

If any repair or replacement work involves digging new footings, the next step before anyone picks up a shovel is to request a locate through Ontario One Call, which is free and required by law.

Q6

Do composite warranties cover fading on Ottawa decks?

Composite decking manufacturers publish fade and stain warranties on their capped wood-plastic composite lines, including 25- and 30-year limited terms, and some cellular PVC lines carry a lifetime limited product warranty with a 50-year fade and stain warranty. These are manufacturer warranty terms, not lifespan guarantees, and the

coverage, exclusions and claim process vary by product.

A few things are worth understanding before you rely on a warranty for an Ottawa deck.

Read what the warranty actually covers, not only the headline number. The terms we read are limited warranties, so read the full warranty document for the exact board line before you choose, not just the marketing summary.

Maintenance affects coverage. We found no neutral cleaning or upkeep interval for composite or PVC decking, so the right source is the manufacturer's care guide for the specific product.

The Ottawa permit process adds one step specific to composite and PVC materials. Where the proposed decking is other than conventional lumber, the City of Ottawa requires a material testing report, either a CCMC or BMEC report, as part of the building permit application.

On the permit itself: the City of Ottawa's permit application goes through the My ServiceOttawa portal, and the City requires three inspections: excavation and foundations before backfill, framing at completion of structural framing and guards, and a final inspection. Each inspection needs to be booked 48 hours in advance.

Before you sign a contract for composite decking, ask the builder to confirm in writing who submits the permit application, who provides the CCMC or BMEC report for the chosen product, and who books each of the three City inspections. Those responsibilities belong in the written contract, not in a verbal understanding.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Deck Builders Ottawa. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa's Building Code Services) before starting any deck project. Decks in Ottawa are built under the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) and the City's permit and zoning rules. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **deckbuildersottawa.ca** for the latest answers.