

Pressure-Treated Decks Get High Marks for Resale Value

Wood-plastic composites not far behind, study shows

Some homeowners are hesitant to invest in home improvements in today's uncertain housing market, worried that they would be pouring their money into a black hole of depreciating real estate. But the "Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report 2007" (www.costvsvalue.com) offers some numbers that could help win over this group.

The study compares the homeowner's cost for 29 remodeling projects with what those improvements would add to the resale price of a house. Both wood and composite decks fared well in the latest version of the report, which was released in November by *Remodeling* magazine, a sister publication to *Professional Deck Builder*.

In the previous version (2006) of the report, researchers had looked at only one deck project: a 16x20 deck supported by 4x4 posts on concrete piers, constructed with pressure-treated joists and composite decking and

matching railing. Other features included a three-step stair, as well as a planter and a built-in bench made with the same material as the decking. The deck was classified as a "midrange" project because of its simple design and small size.

Recognizing that pressure-treated decking is more common than composite decking, the designers of the 2007 study added a second deck project, exactly like the one described above except with pressure-treated wood substituted for the wood-plastic composite. It was classified as a "midrange" project and the composite deck was then reclassified as "upscale" because of its relatively higher cost.

Nationally, adding a pressure-treated-wood deck beat out most of the other remodeling projects examined in the study, as homeowners could expect to recoup, on average, 85.4 percent of its cost at resale. Upscale

Average Cost and Resale Value of a 16x20 Deck

Region	Pressure-Treated Wood			Composite		
	Homeowner Cost	Resale Value	Percent Recouped	Homeowner Cost	Resale Value	Percent Recouped
National	\$10,347	\$8,835	85.4%	\$15,039	\$11,672	77.6%
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)	\$10,634	\$8,977	84.4%	\$15,224	\$11,833	77.7%
Middle Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)	\$10,676	\$8,861	83.0%	\$15,433	\$11,601	75.2%
South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	\$9,266	\$7,936	85.6%	\$14,232	\$11,201	78.7%
East North Central (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI)	\$10,516	\$7,540	71.7%	\$15,357	\$10,583	68.9%
East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)	\$9,140	\$8,358	91.4%	\$14,240	\$11,399	80.0%
West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	\$10,546	\$7,928	75.2%	\$15,368	\$10,822	70.4%
West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)	\$9,182	\$7,859	85.6%	\$14,165	\$10,805	76.3%
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY)	\$10,717	\$9,244	86.3%	\$14,979	\$11,207	74.8%
Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	\$12,812	\$13,836	108.0%	\$16,623	\$16,354	98.4%

fiber-cement siding replacement had the highest national cost-recovery rate (88.1 percent). An upscale composite deck had a somewhat smaller return nationally, at 77.6 percent. For comparison, a homeowner could expect to recoup 78.1 percent of the cost of a major midrange kitchen remodel.

Regional averages vary depending on climate and market factors — and it's important to keep in mind that within

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regions there may be variations between states and even neighborhoods. For both pressure-treated wood and composite decking, the lowest average return was in the East North Central region (71.7 percent and 68.9 percent, respectively). The highest return was in the Pacific region (108 percent and 98.4 percent, respectively), where some homeowners can even make money from adding a pressure-treated deck.

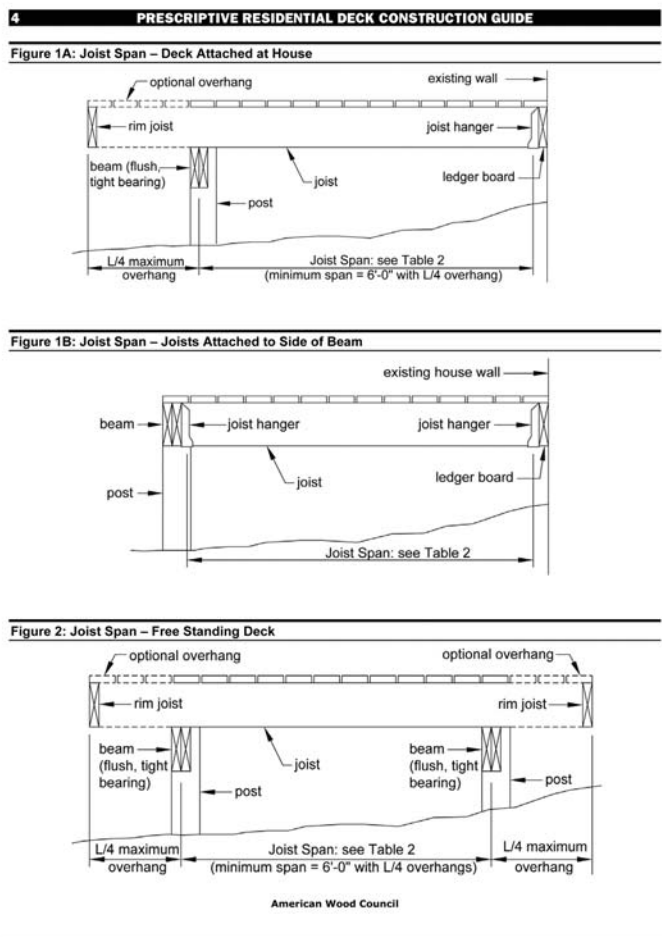
The cost estimates for the various projects were provided by Bethesda, Md.-based HomeTech Information Systems (www.hometechonline.com), a designer of estimating software for remodelers. Costs for labor, material, subtrades, and contractor overhead and profit — adjusted for regional differences — were included in the estimates.

The estimated resale value of the improvements is based on information collected from more than 2,700 surveys returned by Realtors nationwide; respondents were directed to assume the remodeling project had been completed recently. — *Laurie Elden*

This 20-page publication covers the basic code requirements that apply to constructing a single-level residential deck, from the footings up

Other organizations involved with this publication are APA-The Engineered Wood Association, Fairfax County, Va., ICC, NAHB, Simpson Strong-Tie, Southern Forest Products Association, Southern Pine Inspection Bureau, Virginia Tech, Washington State University, and WTCA-Representing the Structural Building Components Industry.

The guide can be downloaded for free at the American Wood Council Web site, www.awc.org. — *L.E.*



In the “unintended consequences” category, New Hampshire lawmakers passed a workers’ compensation law last year that inadvertently required owners of small building companies in the state to pay for workers’ comp insurance for themselves at construction rates, even if the owners didn’t actually spend much time at the job site. The legislature intends to fix the law early this year and call for a refund of some of the premiums paid due to last year’s reform.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released its rollover ratings and crash-test results for 2008 vehicles. The top-rated pickup trucks — none of which achieved a perfect score in the rollover tests — were the Chevrolet Silverado 1500, Dodge Dakota, GMC Sierra 1500, Honda Ridgeline, Mitsubishi Raider, and Toyota Tacoma. Go to www.safercar.gov for more information.

Demand for outdoor remodeling work continues to be strong, according to the NAHB Remodeling Market Index released in December. NAHB reported that 31 percent of the respondents said demand had increased over the previous year and 44 percent said demand had increased during the previous five years. The most common outdoor remodeling job for more than half the respondents was a deck addition; for 35 percent of the respondents, a porch was the most popular outdoor project.

Trex Co. announced in late November that it had better-than-anticipated sales in the beginning of the fourth quarter. The news followed an announcement earlier in the month that Trex was setting aside \$45 million in reserves to pay for replacement of defective decking material manufactured at the

company’s Fernley, Nev., plant from 2003 to mid-2006. Trex reported that a small percentage of these products were flaking on the surface just two to three years after installation.

Employers must pay for personal protective equipment (PPE) if it is required for compliance with OSHA standards, OSHA ruled in November. Employers do not have to pay for ordinary safety-toe protective footwear, ordinary prescription safety eyewear, and clothing and weather-related accessories that can be worn or used off the job; nor do employers have to reimburse employees for the replacement of lost or intentionally damaged PPE. The agency estimates the new rule, which takes effect in May, will prevent more than 20,000 injuries a year. More details are available at www.osha.gov.

2008 Shows & Events

February 13–16
International Builders’ Show
 National Association of Home Builders
 Orlando, Fla.
 202/266-8111
www.buildersshow.com

February 27–March 1
Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Expo 2008

Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association
 Atlanta
 703/522-0086
www.hpbexpo.org

March 4–6
DeckExpo
 Hanley Wood Exhibitions*
 Orlando, Fla.

866/475-6707
www.deckexpo.com

March 26–29
JLC Live Residential Construction Show
 Hanley Wood Exhibitions*
 Providence, R.I.
 800/261-7769
www.jlclive.com

2008 Education

January 31–February 1
“Residential Decks - Component Testing, Code Requirements, Prescriptive Design, and Performance Issues”
 This Virginia Tech course is designed for deck contractors, building officials,

design professionals, home inspectors, and manufacturers and suppliers of deck-related construction materials.
 \$425; 0.8 CEU
 Virginia Tech University
 Dulles, Va.
 540/231-5182

www.cpe.vt.edu/decks/index.html

*Hanley Wood Exhibitions is owned by Hanley Wood, which also owns *Professional Deck Builder*.