

Do You Know Where Your Deck Photos Are?

At the Deck Expo in Baltimore two years ago, I was stunned when I came across a picture of my deck (which had won first place from NADRA the prior year in the exotic-wood category) on the cover of a brochure for a bamboo importer. When I went to the company's booth to let them know exactly what I thought about this, I found to my amazement that they had a 10-foot-wide-by-12-foot-high picture of *my* deck as the backdrop of the booth! I would call that "willful" disregard. You can imagine how the conversation went after I was told that it wasn't my deck and that the decking was bamboo rather than the ipe that I actually used on the project. Later I checked the

manufacturer's website, and, yep, found photos of several of my other deck projects there too. Long story short, I told the owner of the company that he would be getting a bill from my lawyer for \$35,000 for the use of my photos, and a cease-and-desist notice. Of course I didn't get a dime, but I did get a signed statement back saying that all marketing material with my deck pictured on it had been destroyed, and the company would no longer use any unauthorized pictures. Unbelievable.

Sean McAleer

Sparta, N.J.

(from online comments)

High-End Deck Failures

Deck collapses happen at all levels of the market, including far too many here in the upscale northern suburbs of New York. In the last year, I saw a ledger that had been nailed through vinyl siding and had collapsed; the homeowner wanted me to "re-attach it" to his house.

In another example, we had to com-

pletely rebuild a 1,500-square-foot deck on a million-dollar home that was less than two years old, which put in motion a series of events that actually cleaned all the inspectors out of the town in one fell swoop.

Our decks are known all over our region as being "built like tanks," and

while we've even been accused by some inspectors of overbuilding our decks, I know they will never fail and will last indefinitely if properly maintained and finished on a regular basis.

Jeff Ex

(from online comments)

Inspecting Decks

While I agree with Frank Woeste that deck inspections are needed desperately on nearly all decks, I don't agree that a design professional is always the best person to be inspecting decks. In my experience, many design professionals are the ones who caused a problem via a poor design or a compromise in the design. After all, it was a "design pro" who seemed to have left out critical details on the balcony in Berkeley, Calif., that rotted and collapsed last year.

I often see cases where homes near the water have height restrictions to minimize blocking of views, while the owners want 10-foot-high ceilings and a cantilevered view balcony. In order to fit in both requirements, the design pro specifies

2x8 joists on his second-floor deck instead of 2x10s or ideally 2x12s, even though the balcony could be larger and far sturdier with 2x12 framing.

I'd rather have someone with real-world experience in the field, seeing what works and what doesn't and where decks rot and typically leak, than a design pro. Decks, like all other building components, must be designed, assembled, inspected, and maintained. The thing we all forget as pros, though, is that even though we know decks need to be inspected and maintained, the user doesn't. Now, how do we get that message out? ❖

Bill Leys

(from online comments)

We want your two cents.

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