

Building a Wood Deck

Alberta's Safety System

Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with the Safety Codes Council, municipalities, corporations, agencies, and other organizations, to deliver effective community-focused public safety programs and services to Albertans.

Do you need a permit?

Yes, in most cases building a deck will require a permit. As the home owner, you are responsible for getting all necessary permit(s). Check with your municipality to find out what permits you need or contact Municipal Affairs to find the permit provider in your area. Make sure you get your permit(s) before starting your project.

Safety measures

If handrails and/or guardrails are required by the Alberta Building Code, doors opening onto a residential wood deck must be mechanically secured to prevent access until handrails and guards are installed.

Required Plans

Before starting any construction, you must submit plans with your building permit application submitted to your municipality or permit provider. The plans may include any or all of the following:

- Site plan
- Cross-section
- Deck floor plan

Site plan (required information)

- Show north with an arrow and indicate the size of the property using proper dimensions.
- Indicate distances from the deck to property lines and to any existing buildings on site.
- Show location of deck steps (if any).

Importance of permits

The *Safety Codes Act* requires that permits in Alberta be obtained prior to commencing work on any buildings covered by the Alberta Building and Fire Codes, the Canadian Electrical Code, the Gas Code, or the National Plumbing Code.

Permits are part of a process to access compliance to a minimum standard of construction safety for the benefit of all Albertans. If construction projects are undertaken without required permits, the owner may be subject to penalties and extra costs incurred to bring a project into compliance.

As the property owner, you are responsible to obtain all necessary permits. A contractor can look after this on your behalf; however, you should specify in writing, who will get the required permits. Some jurisdictions may require a letter of authorization before a contractor can apply for permit(s) on your behalf.

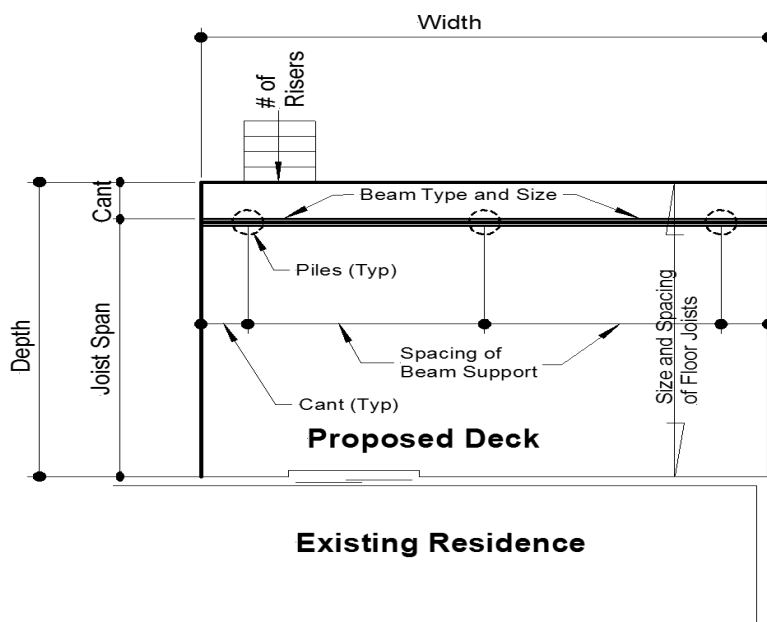
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Deck floor plan (required information)

- Indicate deck size (length, width and height) using proper dimensions.
- Provide deck layout, indicating the joist direction on the plan as well as size, spacing of joists and span between joist supports.
- Show size, location and height of columns.
- Specify beam size.
- Show the type of foundation and depth below grade.
- Describe the location, size and depth of piles (if any).
- Provide details of the stairs (if any). For example, the width, height, rise, run, handrails, etc.

Deck floor plan illustration

Guardrail protection



Open sides of a deck must be protected by a guardrail on each side not protected by a wall:

- for every length where the elevation is more than 600 mm (24") between the deck and ground; or
- if the adjacent ground, within 1.2 m (48") of the deck, has a severe slope.

Benefits of getting a permit

When you get a permit, certified safety codes officers (inspectors) will:

- give you expert advice,
- review your plans to find any potential problems,
- inspect your project, and
- make sure your project meets the Alberta Building Code.

Making changes at the planning stage can save you money, rather than making costly corrections after construction. Certified safety codes officers will give you an inspection report(s) and follow-up on deficiencies to make sure your project is safe and in compliance.

Where do you get a permit?

Permits are available through municipalities that administer the *Safety Codes Act* and through agencies that provide inspection services on behalf of municipalities or the province. If you don't know whether your municipality issues permits, contact the Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA) at 1-877-413-6725 or visit safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA.

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Openings in guards in all non-industrial buildings shall be small enough to not permit the passage of a 100 mm (4") diameter sphere.

Guardrails must be designed so no part, including ornamental fixtures, will allow for climbing.

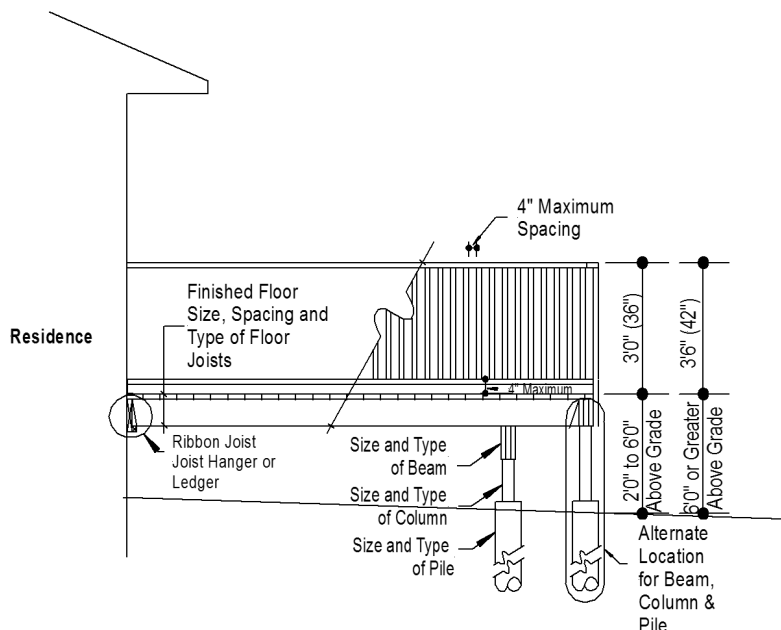
Guardrails must be at least 1.07m (42") high, from the deck surface to the top of the guardrail. Guardrails serving a single home can be 0.9 m (3') high if the deck surface is not more than 1.8 m (6') above the ground.

Surface foundations

If your deck is built on a foundation that is supported on a surface other than rock or coarse-grained soil with good drainage, access to the foundation for re-leveling shall be provided:

- by passageways with a clear height under the deck of at least 600 mm (24") and a width of at least 600 mm (24"); or
- by installing the deck surface in a way that allows easy removal.

Cross-section illustration



Applying for a building permit

When applying for a building permit, you must submit the following information to your local authority:

- details of the project or occupancy to be covered by the permit.
- details of the land on which the project will be located, including a description that will easily identify and locate the building lot.
- plans, specifications and other documents showing, in detail, the proposed occupancy of all parts of the building. state the value of the proposed project.

Hire qualified tradespeople

Specific trades such as electricians, plumbers and gasfitters must be certified to work in Alberta. To find out if the tradespeople you are hiring need to be certified in Alberta or to verify an individual's status, you may contact *The Apprenticeship and Industry Training* office by calling 310-0000.

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Clearances to Overhead Power Lines

Wood decks beneath overhead power lines must maintain a minimum vertical clearance of 3.5 m (11' 6") Consult with your Electrical Utility provider regarding distances between metering and deck surfaces.

Subsurface foundation requirements

- The foundation system must be at least 1.2 m (4') below grade and extend at least 150 mm (6") above grade.
- Footings are not required under piles if the safe load-bearing capacity of the soil is not exceeded. Your safety codes officer may require additional verification.




NOTE: Concrete pile design is not included in the scope of the Alberta Building Code and may require the seal and signature of a Professional Engineer.

If you want to use a concrete pile, the municipality or permit provider in your area will decide if a registered architectural or engineering professional (which include registered technologists) is needed to complete the structural design.

More information:



Alberta Municipal Affairs

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Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA)

Toll-free within Alberta:
 1-877-413-6725
 askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca
 safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA

Call (or click) before you dig!

Alberta One Call will locate utility lines on your property. Call or click before you start any project that involves digging in your yard. Alberta One Call will locate gas, water, electricity, drainage, telephone and cable TV lines. Allow at least two full working days for Alberta One Call to locate your utility lines.

These brochures may be updated periodically. They have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations currently in effect.