

[Flashing the Deck, Balcony or Landing](#)

The installation of a proper flashing, at the exterior wall of a deck, a balcony, a porch or a landing, has become a much ignored detail on the part of many builders. The concept of installing a flashing at a deck or a similar structure is nothing new, it goes way back. If a consumer reads a manual on how to build decks, any basic guide will explain the proper way to install a standard metal flashing at the junction of the deck and the exterior wall of the home. Take a look at the vulnerability of the exterior wall in the photo below.



There is no flashing installed at this deck. Consider this: When rain collects on a flat surface (the deck) the water will, inevitably, be routed against the exterior wall. That may lead to seepage of water into the wall and even related structural damage. It is harder, after the fact, to install a flashing at an existing deck or porch. The irony of it all is that it would have been so easy to put in a proper flashing in the first place. Here is an explanatory photo:



At the most common type of deck, where the ledger board attaches to the side of the house, an L-shaped metal flashing goes up behind the cladding and then it runs out over the top of the ledger board. This flashing looks wide at the bottom because the final decking board has yet to be nailed or screwed into place. It will go down over the flashing but there needs to be a gap left at the top so the siding does not directly touch the decking. If it does, moisture will collect between the two surfaces.

So what happens if there is not a proper flashing at the home you are buying? It depends. In areas of minimal rain exposure, or if there is a roof above, there are fewer risks associated with a missing flashing. I don't consider it good, but I am finding that, with the popularity of cement-based sidings in this region of the country, more and more builders are forgoing the installation of a deck or porch flashing. Many of them believe that, when cement is used as the siding, it is okay to eliminate that step in the process. Sometimes they get by with that shortcut, but there is always a risk that they are wrong. Take a look at this last photo.



The dark areas are water intrusion at the inside of a crawl space — right behind the missing deck flashing. The siding is cement-based but it isn't bullet proof. The house is only four years old and, had this problem not been caught early on, that water issue would have led to wood destroying organisms and fungal issues. If this deck had been in an area that was not exposed to wind and rain, maybe it would have worked-out better. But, surely, it is apparent that a proper flashing is the best insurance against moisture entry. If you want additional information on installing flashings, you are encouraged to perform an Online search or simply purchase a book on building decks.

Thanks for stopping by,

Steven L. Smith

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