

Decks and Porches

You must submit plans for a new or replacement deck or porch before a building permit can be issued. The building inspector will review the plans to ensure they conform to all applicable codes.

If a deck is attached to your house or is part of the exit path you must provide a foundation at least 48" deep. Generally 8" minimum diameter postholes are used but other types of construction can be used. If the deck is separated from the house or exit path, other methods of support are permitted and need not be 48" deep.

Stairs leading to decks must comply with the building codes. Specifically all risers must be equal and have a maximum height of 8" and all runs must be equal and have a minimum width of 9". Guardrails must be at least 36" high and handrails must be between 31" and 38" from the nosing of the stairs. Handrails must also be graspable and a 2"x4" doesn't comply. For size, height and shape go to the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code. Link on this page and see COMM 321.04(3)

Plan evaluation

Here are some of the items the inspector looks for when evaluating porch and deck plans:

Porches and decks must comply with all zoning setback requirements.

The type and depth of the foundation.

The size, spacing and spans of framing members

Decks 24" or more above ground level must provide code compliant guardrails and handrails.

Submitting plans

You need to bring the following materials when you apply for a building permit:

Two copies of a certified survey of your property OR a scale drawing or site plan that shows where the deck or porch will be located relative to the property lines.

Footing size and placement.

The type and dimensions of construction materials (size, spacing and spans of beams, joists, decking material, etc.).

Steps, guardrails, railings, etc.

Associated permits

If your project involves installing a new service door or patio door to access the new deck, that work must be included on your deck or porch permit. If high voltage lighting or outlets are needed an electrical permit is required. If you need to demolish an old porch, you may also be required to take out a demolition permit.