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The Importance of Deck Railing: Four Considerations before Buying

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Deck railings are an integral component of outdoor living spaces. The right look and style will add finish and polish to a deck – tying the whole package together. They are more than decorative enhancements, they are a necessary safety measure often required by building codes.

Durability, stability and functionality are all critical in choosing the appropriate railing for a deck. There are many considerations homeowners need to account for when designing their backyard retreats, and railing is key to creating a safe and appealing outdoor area. Here are four general factors to explore when choosing a railing system.

1. **Functionality** – A railing can enhance aesthetics, provide safety, and can even allow for stunning views of a backyard haven. By prioritizing a railing's function, homeowners can more easily determine the ideal railing for their needs. Metal balusters or wood? What about composite? Height of deck railings? Should lighting be incorporated?

To help homeowners narrow down their choices, TimberTech created an online interactive quiz based on different decking needs. At the end of the quiz, the best railing system for a particular homeowner's desires is recommended. Railing systems are available in several different colors and styles. Homeowners can try them all out by using TimberTech's online color visualizer tool at timbertech.com/colorvisualizer.

2. **Durability** – Many homeowners weigh the benefits of pressure treated wood, metal and composite railings and each material offers different durability benefits. After weathering and regular wear and tear, wood railings can become loose and begin rotting, prompting more consumers into considering composite or metal.
3. **Stability** – Beyond aesthetics, a railing has to be able to withstand someone leaning against it or heavy winds. TimberTech's RadianceRail has no exposed hardware so it provides a cleaner look while

reducing chances of compromising the structural integrity. All of TimberTech's railing systems meet or exceed all residential building codes.

4. Code Compliance – Before beginning a project, there are few things homeowners need to do to ensure their decks will be code compliant. Permits are necessary for decks and reputable contractors will file the necessary paperwork for approval. But, some homeowner associations or historic preservation boards may need to approve deck plans, including railings.

For the DIY crowd, as a general rule railing balusters must pass the four-inch ball test – meaning a ball of four inches or larger cannot pass through the space between balusters. Also, important is that structures taller than five-feet and ten-inches must have a rail height at least 42 inches and structures less than that height need to have railings at least 36 inches tall.

“Railings are an important part of a deck that can tend to be an afterthought for homeowners, but there are several considerations that must be taken into account,” said Cheryl Copeland, senior marketing manager for TimberTech. “Consumers who take the time to weigh all the options available to them at the start of a project will be glad they did.”

Above and beyond decks, railings are also important components on porches, around pools and along any stairs. Composite is easily incorporated into any of these designs and is quickly becoming a more heavily favored option as alternative decking companies like TimberTech expand their product offerings.