

## Jurisdiction Survey on IRC treated lumber for decks

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**Question:** The IRC requires treated lumber for decks, and yet few Colorado contractors are willingly using treated lumber. Our work-around is to accept joist tape in lieu of treated lumber, excepting the ledger. How goes it for other jurisdictions?

Responses:

1. No, all wood exposed to the weather must be of approved, naturally durable for our climate. We do not allow paint either.
2. In the past we've used the exception for sawn lumber in a geographic region where the climate precludes the need (unless they're less than 18" above grade). We are often seeing the tops of non-treated joists getting flashed these days.
3. Section R507.2.1 states, "Wood materials shall be No. 2 grade or better lumber, preservative-treated in accordance with Section R317, or approved, naturally durable lumber, and termite protected where required in accordance with Section R318". Treated lumber is one of the options, not a specific requirement. Although I think treated lumber is a better option, the code is a minimum and it is not required. However, there appears to be a conflict in the code, Surprise! Section R317.1, Item 8 states, "Portions of wood structural members that form the structural supports of buildings, balconies, porches or similar permanent building appurtenances where those members are exposed to the weather without adequate protection from a roof, eave, overhang or other covering that would prevent moisture or water accumulation on the surface or at joints between members". The question is does this section apply to decks? Is a deck similar to a balcony or porch. The other issue is that the deck requirement is a specific requirement, and this is a general requirement. When this type of conflict occurs, the specific requirement would apply. So, it appears that the deck allowance for No. 2 grade or better lumber would apply.
4. We require treated lumber. Have not heard from the inspectors that contractors are pushing back. I once had a contractor push back due to this area being in a "dry climate" but did not accept his argument.
5. -IRC allows a variety of materials per 507.2.5. If those materials can be adequately justified by the design professional and accepted by the AHJ, the code does not require PT wood. If wood IS used, it needs to be PT or naturally durable (cedar, locust .. though neither of those are great for decks...)
6. We currently have the 2015 IRC adopted. We have not required treated lumber for decks unless they are closer than 18" to grade. I know it says within the periphery of the foundation, but that's all we could find in the 2015 Version.
7. The IRC does not require treated lumber in all cases - section R507..2.1 sends you to section R317 and as long as the wood is at least 8" above grade it can be typical framing lumber
8. That solution (joist tape except for the ledger) seems pretty good. We didn't worry about it in the past since it was only mentioned for inside crawlspaces. I prefer to just go by the book, and

rarely get pushback, but I would entertain protections for the tops of joist and beams if that was offered. It depends on the jurisdiction, though. One, for example, amended the code to require decay resistant deck materials before the Code went there.

9. IRC section R507.2.1 seems clear to me. Need to use treated or naturally resistant to decay lumber. The contractor would need to show that the "Tape" provides an equal amount of protection as an alternative method. R104.11
10. In my mind the tape would not provide the same protection
11. We don't consider tape an alternative to treated lumber.
12. IRC does not require treated lumber, but rather materials that are suited for exterior exposure. If the contractor does not want to use treated, then there are options for redwood or cedar. Any non-treated would need to be primed and painted.
13. We require either treated or naturally decay resistant lumber for decks, as required by IRC Section R507.2.1. Sometimes we fight contractors over it.