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# TECHNICAL BULLETIN

## Black Label™ Decking and Cladding Maintenance

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### **Natural Weathering**

If Black Label™ Decking and Cladding is left unfinished or isn't cleaned and refinished over time, it will naturally weather to a silver-grey patina.

### **Finishing and Maintenance**

Even if you intend to let the deck weather, the first coat of Black Label™ Ipe + Marine Oil on all faces before installation is optional but recommended. Applying Black Label™ Ipe + Marine Oil slows moisture absorption and release during seasonal moisture transitions, reduces surface checking, and improves stability during the initial acclimation process. This can significantly improve project outcomes when installing air-dried decking in dry, arid conditions and direct sunlight. It is important to remember that you can apply water-based finishes over oil-based finishes. However, you cannot apply oil-based finishes over water-based finishes, so make sure you consider this when selecting finishes.

### **Preparation, Finishing, Maintenance, Cleaning, and Restoration**

When specifying wood products for exterior construction, it is important to have realistic appearance expectations. When used outdoors, wood products will not retain the appearance associated with their use in interior applications like furniture or flooring. Wood will not maintain its original color over time without cleaning and reapplication of finishes. Wood, by its nature, will be subject to some limited amount of natural reaction as it cannot be predicted how a natural product like wood will behave in any given environment or conditions.

## **New Deck Preparation**

Always clean your deck using Black Label™ Deck Cleaner to remove dirt and debris from the wood surface. After cleaning, apply Black Label™ Wood Brightener to remove any stains or discolorations caused by weathering. Black Label™ Wood Brightener enhances finish penetration as well. Make sure you allow the wood to dry thoroughly before and between any cleaner, brightener, or finish applications.

If you are sealing to maintain the color of your Black Label™ Wood Deck, consider using cleaners from the same manufacturer as the sealer. Caution should be exercised when using wood brighteners containing oxalic acid and should only be used if the deck will be refinished after brightening. If the wood is cleaned and left untreated, oxalic acid can turn the lignin in natural wood species into sugar and speed up mold growth.

## **Finishing**

Use Black Label™ Ipe + Marine Oil to maintain the natural color. Test all finishes on the decking to determine their compatibility and appearance. Before application, brush and clean the decking surface to remove dirt, dust, and other airborne contaminants. Black Label™ wood products are dense, so apply thin coats, wiping off any excess oil and allowing each coat to dry thoroughly, or a sticky surface may result. Pre-finished decking may or may not be available in your market. Check with your local dealer for the availability of this service. Grain, density, and moisture content can all affect finishing. Every piece of wood will accept finish differently, even pieces from the same tree. Performing samples of the finishes are always recommended before completing the full application. Black Label™ does not guarantee the performance of finishes. Warranties, if available, are the responsibility of the finish manufacturer.

## **Finished Deck Maintenance and Weathering**

Regular cleaning and reapplication of Black Label™ Ipe + Marine Oil (as needed) will enhance the appearance of your deck. The lowest maintenance approach we have found for maintaining finished decks is to treat them like you would a piece of furniture in your home. Simply clean your deck when it is dirty and wipe-on wipe-off a fresh coat of finish before the finish deteriorates from UV exposure and the greying out or other forms of discoloration begin to take place. A good schedule is to do it every spring and fall.

## Spotting, Staining, and Discoloration

From time to time, we get calls asking about black spots that appear on wood decking. Usually, these spots appear on wood surfaces due to mold or a reaction between iron and natural tannic acid found in all woods.

Mold and mildew will grow on any surface where a food source has accumulated. This includes plastic and glass surfaces. Mold or mildew can be cleaned with Black Label™ Deck Cleaner.

If deck cleaners do not remove the black stains, your spots are likely caused by an iron reaction. Iron spots often appear as black rings around galvanized steel or low-grade stainless fasteners. Small black dots on the deck may also be caused by filings from iron railings, shingle granules, fertilizers, or any particle containing iron that rests on the deck surface.

This type of black staining on the deck can be removed with Black Label™ Wood Brightener. Black Label™ Wood Brightener is supplied in a powder or a concentrated solution form and is mixed with water. Multiple applications may be necessary to remove the stain. To ensure the problem doesn't come back, the fastener may need to be taken off and replaced with a higher-quality stainless steel fastener.

If you wait for the finish to deteriorate beyond the capabilities of deck cleaners and wood brighteners, all is not lost. Simply remove the old finish using a finish stripper, followed by a cleaner, wood brightener, and oil-based finish, just like you did when you first installed the deck. That's the beauty of wood. It can always be restored to its original appearance. Unlike PVC or composite decking, even in the worst possible condition, a hardwood deck can simply be sanded like a solid wood floor and restored to a like-new condition by prepping it like you would a new deck.

- Use extreme caution when handling these chemicals and wear protective clothing and eyewear.
- Do not mix these cleaners with ammonia or household cleaners.
- We recommend that tests in small areas on a few different boards be conducted before overall use on the project.
- Always consult and follow the manufacturer's recommendations when using proprietary products.
- It is crucial that oil-based sealers, along with the rags, brushes, or rollers used to apply them, be stored in tightly sealed metal containers and disposed of properly. If left exposed to air, they may be subject to spontaneous combustion.