



Decks, balconies and balustrades

BACKGROUND

Some decks, balconies and balustrades of leaky homes could be at risk of collapsing. If your house has a deck or balcony, this information sheet summarises information about the risks to decks and balconies of leaky homes.

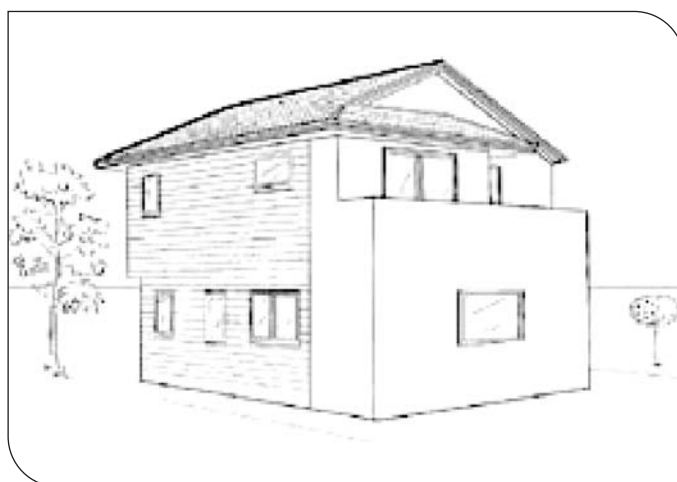
Structures that may pose a risk are those that rely on timber beams for structural support. Those at greatest risk include balconies on buildings with lightweight claddings that imitate concrete or masonry, balconies and decks supported by untreated kiln-dried timber, and balconies on which water pools.

A balustrade is a barrier built around the edge of a balcony or deck. Those at greatest risk include enclosed balustrades covered with what appears to be solid cladding that imitates concrete or masonry (see drawing below). Water can leak inside the cladding where it gets trapped and rots the framing timber.

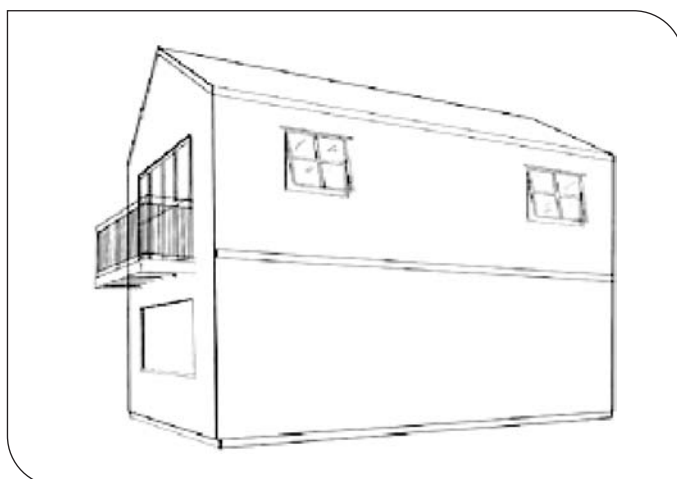
Often any potential problems are hidden behind balustrades or under balconies and may not be immediately noticeable.

RISK FACTORS AND WARNING SIGNS

- Balconies where support beams are constructed of untreated kiln-dried timber.
- Balustrades and balconies clad with lightweight materials imitating concrete or masonry.
- Balconies and balustrade tops where water pools and doesn't drain away.
- Balconies and balustrades that move or where there are damp spots, cracks or stains near where the balcony joins the main part of the building, or the balustrade joins the balcony.
- Balustrades that have hand rails that penetrate into the house and/or balustrade wall.
- Cracked plaster, mould growth or colour change in the plaster finish.



Home showing typical enclosed balustrade



Home showing typical cantilevered balcony

Drawings supplied by BRANZ

WHAT TO DO

If you think that your deck, balcony or balustrade may be at risk, you should stop using it until you have had it checked by a suitably qualified expert.

The following organisations will be able to identify people in your area with the necessary qualifications.

- BRANZ Ltd (0900 5 90 90 or www.branz.co.nz, look under 'Advice'/'Accredited Adviser Listing')
- New Zealand Institute of Building Surveyors (0800 113 400 or www.nzibs.org.nz, look under 'Find a Member').

MORE INFORMATION

BRANZ Ltd brochure Safety Checks for Decks and Balconies is available free of charge to homeowners through the BRANZ website at www.branz.org.nz/free-publications/