HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

PORCH RAILING POSTS

One method of installing

There are almost as many railing styles for porches as there are houses. City code will generally specify such things as railing height and spindle spacing; but, within those parameters, rails can be constructed in any number of ways. Thus, they can define the style of a home, in addition to protecting against accidental falls. Railings are seldom a problem, unless they are used on a porch that also serves as a roof for the floor below. Then, they are the most frequent place for a leak to begin.

WHY RAILING POSTS LEAK

The most common way of attaching railing posts to the roof practically guarantees a leak. All too often, they are nailed or screwed right through the roofing, with the nail heads then covered with a little tar. This may work for a year or so, but eventually the tar dries out, cracks, and allows water into the room below. Even before that, people may walk out on the roof and lean on the railings, or hold onto them for security. As the rails are poked and prodded and leaned upon, they move – and the tar seal on the nail heads can crack and open up.

A BETTER WAY TO ATTACH POSTS

There is a method for making and attaching the railing posts that will reduce the chances of a leak.

1. For each post, nail or screw four pieces of the same width lumber together to form a hollow square *(see Illustration 1)*.
2. Then, measure the inside dimensions of the post. Cut two blocks of “2 x” material to this size.
3. Locate the place on the roof where the post is supposed to go, and mark the spot. Coat the bottom of one of your cut blocks with silicone caulk. Then, with that caulked side down, center the block over the spot you marked and screw it down. Screw the second block to the top of the first one.
4. Next, apply silicone caulk to the bottom edge of the post. Slip the post over the blocks you screwed to the porch deck.
5. Now, after ensuring that the post is plumb, screw through the sides of the post into the blocks to secure it *(see Illustration 2)*.

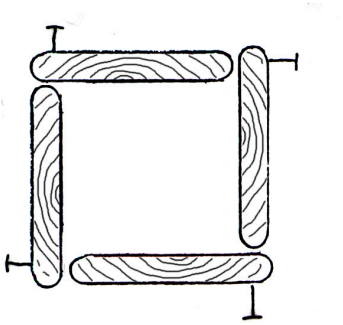


Illustration 1: End view. Nail or screw boards together along the outside edges to form a square.

When you put a cap on this post, there will be virtually no way for water to get into the roof.

TIP: ATTACH THE RAILINGS FIRST

If you feel savvy enough, you can even attach the railings to the sides of the post before you assemble the pieces together into a square. This assembly makes an attractive and strong rail design.

Whether you construct the railing yourself or hire a carpenter to do the work, this system will adapt to nearly every railing style. With this design, you will be insuring yourself against water leaks through the roof for quite a while.

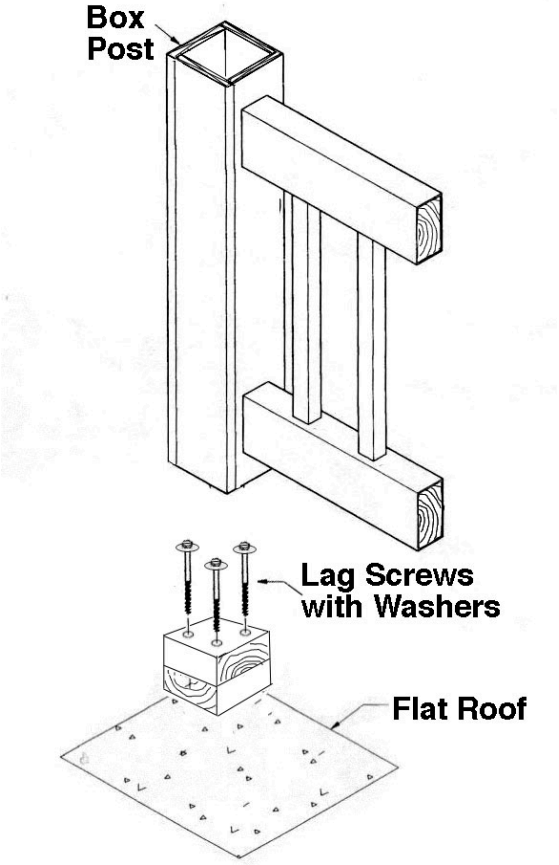


Illustration 2: Assembly. Slip pre-made post over blocks on roof; screw through the sides of post into blocks.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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