Western Red Cedar Checking

A Natural Characteristic. Not a Defect.

Check vs. Split

What is Checking?

Small lengthwise separations across or though annual growth rings.

Check

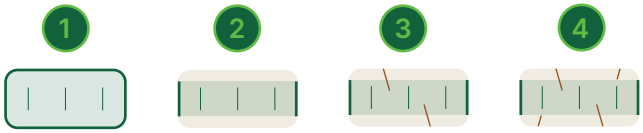
- Expected in cedar timbers
- Cosmetic surface feature
- Surface checks do not affect strength

Split

- Extends face to adjacent face
- Different from checking
- May require evaluation

Why Checking Occurs

Western Red Cedar absorbs and releases moisture. When the surface dries faster than the interior, outer fibres contract while the core remains wetter, creating tension that is relieved through checks.



Green Timber
High moisture throughout.

Surface Dries
Moisture leaves the surface first.

Outer Fibres Shrink
Interior remains wetter.

Checks Develop
Tension is relieved.

Does Checking Affect Product Integrity?

Generally no. Surface checking does not affect strength or integrity when the timber is used within its published engineering design values[1].

How to Minimize Excessive Checking

Checking is normal, but thoughtful material selection, handling, and installation can help limit its extent.

Select Quality Material
Choose premium cedar from reputable manufacturers.

Store Properly
Protect timbers from direct sun and weather before installation.

Allow Acclimation
Allow material to adjust gradually to site conditions.

Install & Maintain
Follow recommended installation and maintenance practices.

Will My Cedar Timber Check?

Most Western Red Cedar timbers will develop some checking over their service life. Larger timbers typically show larger checks.

[1] *Deep checks in timber in areas subject to high shear stress can affect product integrity*

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