

R312.1.2

Guard Height

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

CHANGE SUMMARY: The provision requiring that the guard height be measured from the surface of adjacent fixed seating has been removed from the code.

2015 CODE: R312.1.2 Height. Required guards at open-sided walking surfaces, including stairs, porches, balconies, or landings, shall be not less than 36 inches (914 mm) high in height as measured vertically above the adjacent walking surface, ~~adjacent fixed seating~~ or the line connecting the leading edges of the treads.

Exceptions:

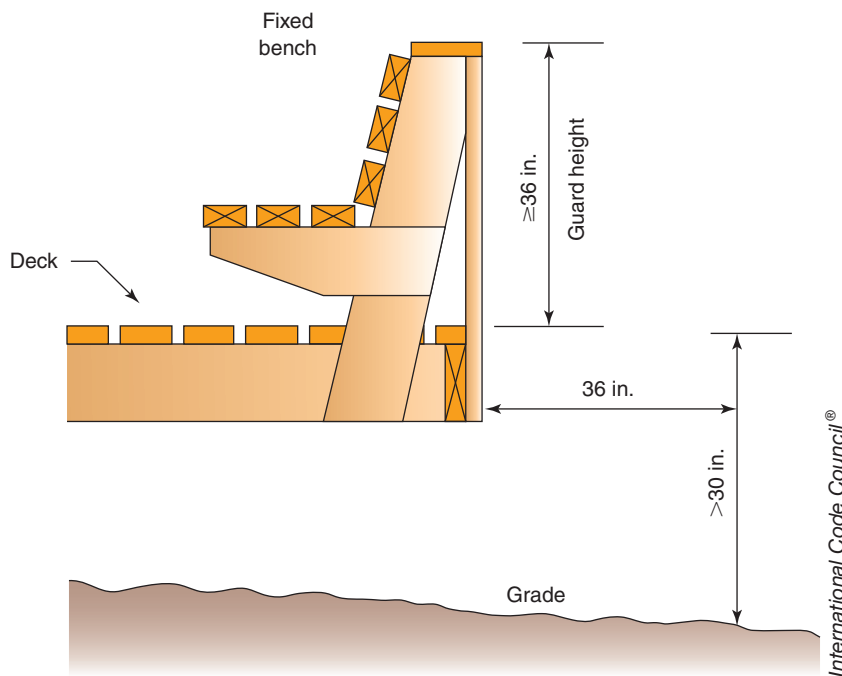
1. Guards on the open sides of stairs shall have a height not less than 34 inches (864 mm) measured vertically from a line connecting the leading edges of the treads.
2. Where the top of the guard also serves as a handrail on the open sides of stairs, the top of the guard shall be not less than 34 inches (864 mm) and not more than 38 inches (965 mm) as measured vertically from a line connecting the leading edges of the treads.

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: The requirement to extend a guard 36 inches above the surface of fixed seating that is adjacent to a required guard, which appeared in the 2009 and 2012 IRC, has been removed from the code. A similar requirement appeared in the 2009 IBC but was deleted from the 2012 IBC. The provision was initially placed in the code due



© Anne Kitzman/Shutterstock.com

Example of a guard with fixed seating



Measuring guard height at fixed seating

to the concern of children climbing on fixed seating and falling over the usual guard that had a height of 36 inches above the walking surface of the deck. With the removal of the provision, the IRC and IBC are now consistent with each other in this area. Proponents of this change reasoned that there was no technical justification to raise the height of the guard at the back of fixed seating when it was placed in the code and that the requirement was overly restrictive. There also were concerns that there has been no definition of fixed seating. Consensus held that fixed seating, similar to movable furniture and other objects found adjacent to guards on a deck, should not be regulated as a walking surface.