

Handrails Within Dwelling Units

Guideline

Guideline ESP- 08

Purpose

This guideline has been developed to help improve consistency with the installation, education and enforcement of a handrails installed in dwelling units for new or renovated construction.



Code Reference

Current National Building Code – Alberta Edition Division B Section 9.8.7.2.

2015 Illustrated Users Guide – NBC 2015 Part 9 Housing and Small Buildings 9.8.7.2.



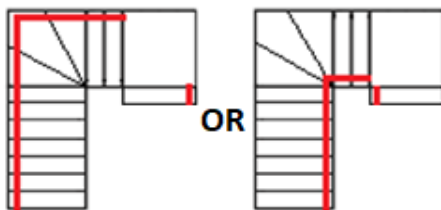
Conclusion

This Guideline provides clarity and direction from Rocky View County on their interpretation on continuity of handrails and what this means for a dwelling unit. Based on the information provided within this Guideline, continuous handrails should be installed in the following method(s).

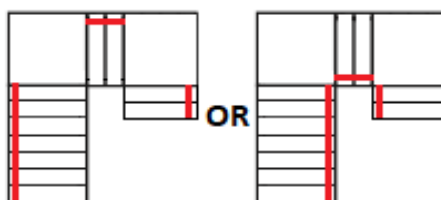
1. Continuity of Handrails – For stairs or ramps serving a single dwelling unit, handrails must be continuously graspable throughout the length of the stair, except where interrupted by a doorway, landing or newel post.

This means that where you have a stairway that includes a landing between one or more flights of stairs, a handrail must be provided along each flight of stairs so that the entire length of stair from one floor level to the next floor level has a handrail. Handrails must be installed:

- a) from the bottom riser to the top riser, and
- b) along all flights of stairs, no matter how many risers.



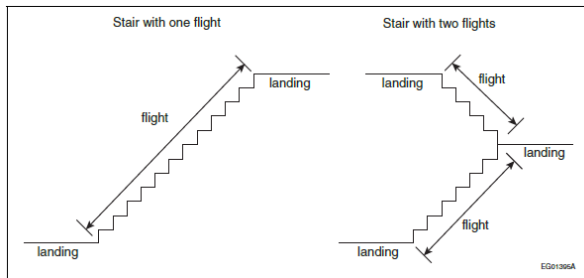
Handrail required throughout the total length of the stair, from bottom riser to top riser including the winders.



Handrail required along the length of the flight of the stair. The handrail can be interrupted by the landing.

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2. **Required handrails** – A handrail, along one side of the stair only, is required for stairs (length of stair) within a dwelling unit which have more than 2 risers, and for exterior stairs with more than 3 risers. There is no maximum width where an additional handrail would be required.
3. **Length of Flight** – **Length of Flight** means a continuous series of steps from one landing or floor level to the next landing or floor level. For handrails and ramps serving a single dwelling unit, handrails must be continuously graspable throughout the length of flights of stairs, from the bottom riser to the top riser.



4. **Length of Stair** – **Length of Stair** means a series of steps which are continuous throughout the stair, including landings. For handrails and ramps serving occupancies other than dwelling units, handrails must be continuously graspable throughout the length of the stair including the landing.
5. **Guardrails** – Where the total height from the step is not greater than 600 mm (2 feet), a guardrail can be omitted.

(Note: The triangular space formed by the stairs is now considered part of the guard and must be small enough to prevent a 6-inch sphere from passing through.)

6. **Windows** - Openable windows in residential buildings must have either a guard or a mechanism (WOCD) that limits the opening to no more than 100 mm and can only be released with tools or special knowledge. This protection isn't needed if the bottom edge of the window is more than 900 mm above the floor inside or less than 1,800 mm above the ground outside.
 - For egress windows: The window cannot be locked or require tools and special knowledge to open. However, a mechanism complying with ASTM F2090 "Standard Specification for Window Fall Prevention Devices with Emergency Escape (Egress) Release Mechanisms" is allowed under variance (23-BCV-001)

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Handrail required on one side throughout flight of stair. Where the bottom open side is less than 600 mm to floor level, no guardrail is required.



Reference

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- October 2024

Last Review Date

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