

Definitions:

A **guard or guardrail** is a building component or a system of building components located at or near the open sides of elevated walking surfaces that minimizes the possibility of a fall from the walking surface to a lower level.

A **handrail** is a horizontal or sloping rail intended for grasping by the hand for guidance or support.

Disclaimer

This publication is intended to be a guide to assist in answering general inquiries. This publication does not include all aspects of the relevant codes. Code requirements vary depending on numerous factors. For specific questions, please contact our office.

Permits

Permits are required for constructing, enlarging, altering, repairs, moving demolishing or changing the occupancy of a structure. All electrical, heating, and plumbing work is to be completed by licensed contractors under permit. Applications for permits may be obtained through the Permits office on the 3rd floor of City Hall. Questions about permits call 301-739-8577 Ext. 123 or email permits@hagerstownmd.org

Phone: 301-739-8577, Ext. 103

Fax: 301-791-2650

Email: codecompliance@hagerstownmd.org

April 2025



Department of Housing and Community Development
One East Franklin Street, Suite 300
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Residential Handrail & Guardrail



Requirements



1 E. Franklin St. Suite 300
Hagerstown, MD 21740

301-739-8577 Ext. 103

Residential Handrails & Guardrails

Handrail Grip-size

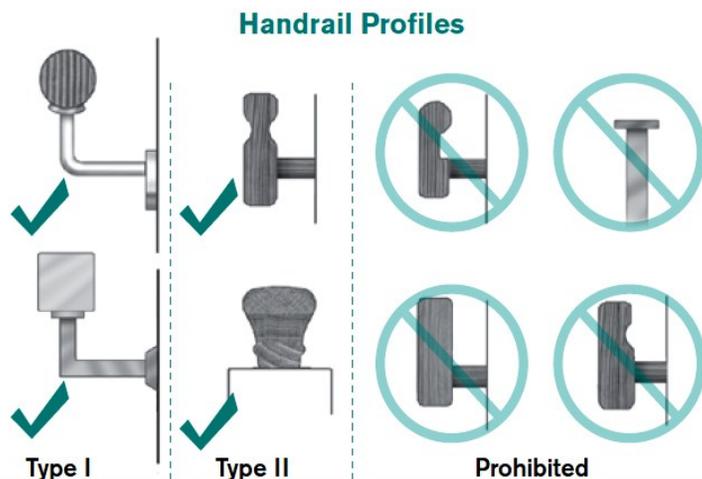
All handrails shall be of an approved type to provide grasp-ability.

- Type I—Handrails with a circular cross section between 1 1/4 inches and 2 inches
- Type II—Non-circular handrails are to have a perimeter between 4 inches and 6 1/4 inches with a maximum cross section of 2 1/4 inches. Edges are to be rounded.

Handrail Clearance

Clear space between the handrail and wall or similar surface shall be at least 1 1/2 inches.

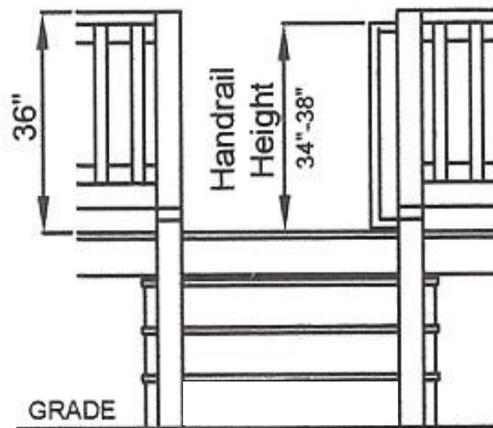
Handrails are to be free of any sharp or abrasive elements.



Exterior and Interior Requirement

Every exterior and interior flight of stairs having four or more risers shall have a handrail on one side of the stair.

Every open portion of the stair, landings, balcony, porch, deck, ramp, or other walking surface which is more than 30 inches above the walking floor or grade below shall have guards.



Specifications

Existing handrails height measured vertically from the adjoining tread nose shall be not less than 30 inches and not more than 42 inches. Newly installed handrails are to be between 34 inches and 38 inches.

Every handrail or guard shall be firmly fastened and capable of supporting normally imposed loads and shall be maintained in good condition.

Existing guards shall not be less than 30 inches high above the floor of the landing, balcony, porch, deck, ramp or other walking surface. Newly installed guards must be no less than 36 inches.

Guard opening limitations require intermediated balusters or ornamental closures which do not allow the passage of a sphere 4 inches or more in diameter.

Replacing guardrails in Three or more unit Structures

Common area guards for buildings with three units or more shall be 42" high above the floor or walking surface.