

Residential Guards (Guardrails)

This tip sheet reflects code requirements of the 2021 International Residential Code (IRC) with Washington State Amendments.

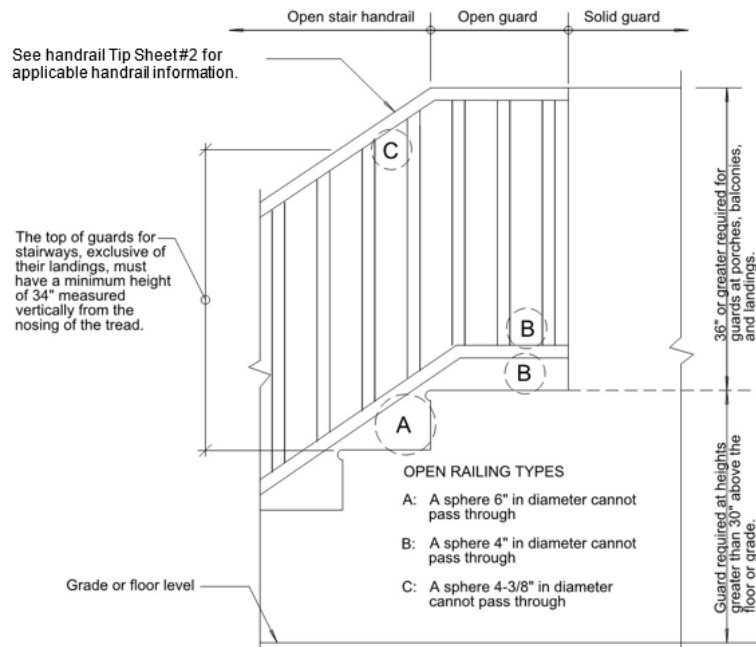


Figure 1: Guard Elevation (IRC R312)

Requirements

- Guards are required when portions of open-sided walking surfaces, mezzanines, lofts, stairs, ramps and landings are located more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below at any point within 36 inches horizontally to the edge of the open side. (IRC 312.1.1) refer to Figure 1 for major requirements.
- Guards shall be structurally designed to comply with IRC Table R301.5 (i.e., designed for a 200-pound load in any direction along the top and a 50-pound point load elsewhere). See footnote h for glazing used in handrail assemblies and guards.
- For glass in guards or guards or railings, including structural baluster panels and nonstructural in-fill panels, they shall be considered to be a hazardous location. (IRC R308.4.4).

Guards in lofts with ceiling heights of 7 feet or less guards shall not be less than 36 inches in height or one-half of the clear height from the loft floor to the loft ceiling, whichever is less. See IRC 333 to determine if the space qualifies as a loft.