

EXTERIOR STAIRS TO YOUR HOME

If you plan to build new stairs up to your front door, rear door or deck, there are rules regarding construction, railings, landings, and more.

When you need a permit

If you are building or replacing stairs on the exterior of your home, you may need a permit. As the homeowner, you are responsible for getting all required permits.

Check with your municipality on the zoning and development bylaws in your area; as well as to find out what permits you need. Some restrictions may apply. Make sure you get permit(s) before starting your project.

Exterior stair construction

The rise of steps must be between 125 mm and 200 mm (4 7/8 to 7 7/8 inches) and uniform.

Riser height is measured vertically from the surface of one tread to the surface of an adjacent tread or landing.

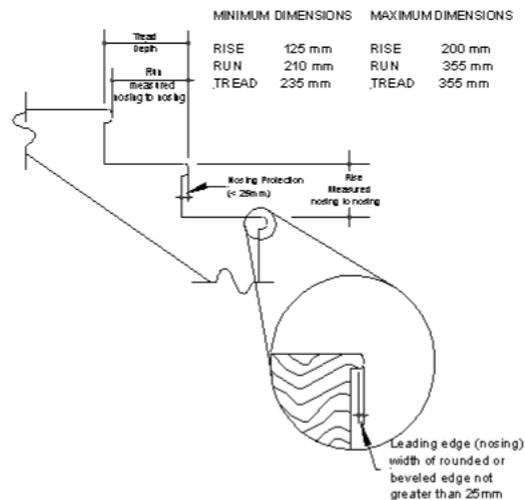
The run of steps must be between 255 mm and 355 mm (10 to 14 inches) and uniform. A step's run is measured from the face of one riser to the face of an adjacent riser.

The tread of a step is the step's run plus the nosing (if one is provided) that extends beyond the face of the riser below. The depth of a rectangular tread cannot be not less than the step's run and not more than its run plus 25 mm (one inch).

Exterior wood steps must not be in direct contact with the ground unless suitably treated with a wood preservative.

Exterior landings

Landings make stairs safer to use. They break up tall flights of stairs to allow the user to rest safely. They also provide an adequate surface for users to change direction when entering or exiting a flight of stairs.



SAFETY TIPS

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A landing must be provided:

- at the top and bottom of each flight of interior and exterior stairs, including stairs in garages
- at the top and bottom of every ramp with a slope greater than 1 in 50
- where a doorway opens onto a stair or ramp
- where a ramp opens onto a stair
- where a stair opens onto a ramp

A landing is not required at the top of an exterior flight of stairs serving a secondary entrance to a single home, provided:

- the stair does not contain more than three risers
- the principal door is a sliding door or swings away from the stair, and
- only a storm or screen door, if any, swings over the stair and is equipped with hardware to hold it open

Handrails

Handrails provide assistance with normal balance on stairs and they offer a continuous handhold to support persons who may stumble. The guidance and support provided by handrails is especially important at the beginning and end of ramps and flights of stairs, and at changes in direction at landings and winders.

Handrails must be constructed to be continually graspable along their entire length. Where an exterior stair has more than three risers, a handrail is required on one side of the stair.

Guards

Railings, as they are commonly referred to) provide a protective barrier around openings in floors and at the open sides of stairs, landings, balconies, mezzanines, galleries or raised walkways to prevent accidental falls.

Where no wall is present and there is a difference in elevation of 600 mm (24 inches) or more between two floor/ground surfaces, the risk of injury in a fall is sufficient to warrant the installation of guards to reduce the likelihood of a fall.

Where a guard protects a level more than 4.2 m above an adjacent surface, guards must be designed so that no member, attachment or opening located between 140 mm and 900 mm above the level protected by the guard facilitates climbing.

Openings through guards shall be of a size that prevents the passage of a spherical object having a diameter of 100 mm (4 inches).



SAFETY TIPS

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Contact

Community and Technical Support branch of Municipal Affairs:

Hours: 8:15 am to 4:30 pm (open Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays)

Toll free: 1-866-421-6929

Email: safety.services@gov.ab.ca

Safety Codes Council:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: sccinfo@safetycodes.ab.ca

Web: safetycodes.ab.ca

Alberta Safety Codes Authority:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca

