

**NC Department of Insurance  
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**Guardrails and Handrails on Stairs**

**Code:** 2012 North Carolina Building Code  
**Section:** 1009.12 and 1013

**Date:** September 1, 2011

**Question:**

Can the guard on stairways required by Section 1013 also serve as the handrail required by 1009.12?

**Answer:**

No. The code requires a 42 inch high guard on open sides of stairways over 30 inches high. The handrail, which is required on both sides of stairways, must be 34 to 38 inches high inclusive. There is no allowance for adjusting the height of a guard on a stairway so that it can also serve as the required handrail. The handrail, however, may be attached to a guard.

**Keywords:**

Guardrails, guard rail, hand rail, stair, fall protection