

**NC Department of Insurance  
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division  
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**Guardrails and Handrails on Stairs**

**Code:** 2018 Building Code  
**Section:** 1011.11 and 1015

**Date:** September 12, 2018

**Question:**

Can the guard on stairways required by Section 1015 also serve as the handrail required by 1011.11?

**Answer:**

No. 1015.3 requires guardrails to be 42 inches high. Section 1014.2 requires handrails, which is required on both sides of stairways, to 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:**

guard rail, hand rail, fall protection