

**NC Department of Insurance
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division
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48" Minimum Width of Exterior Accessible Path

Code: 2012 Building Code
Section: 1104.2

Date: July 1, 2015

Question:

What is the correct exterior accessible path of travel? ANSI A117.1-09, Section 403.5 says 36" but the inspector is telling me that it is 48". I have looked all over ANSI and have not found anything anywhere that gives 48" for a path of travel. Also, the 2010 ADA Standard requires 36", so which is it?

Answer:

The 2012 NC Building Code (NCBC) is the scoping document for the 2009 ANSI A117.1 standard. Anything in the NCBC will override the provisions in the referenced standard per NCBC, Section 102.4.

NCBC 1104.1 and 1104.2 both specifically state: The exterior accessible path of travel shall be fixed, firm, nonslip and a minimum 48 inches (1219 mm) wide. Where handrails are provided, the measurement shall be between the handrails.

Where there are differences between the 2010 ADA Standards and any model building code, such as the NC Building Code, whichever requirement is more restrictive takes precedence. In this case, the 48" NC requirement is more restrictive than the 36" ADA requirement.

The reason that NC has a 48" exterior path of travel requirement is to allow sufficient space for the following:

1. A person to walk with a guide animal.
2. A person to walk next to another person while supporting or assisting him or her.
3. To allow sufficient space for non-standard size mobility devices.

Keywords:

Walkways, pedestrians, bridges