

**NC Department of Insurance  
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**Guard Requirements for Rooftop HVAC Equipment**

**Code:** 2018 Mechanical Code  
**Section:** 304.11

**Date:** March 15, 2019

**Question:**

Are new guards required to be installed when replacing existing rooftop HVAC equipment in the same location with new equipment and no guards are present and none were required when the equipment was originally installed?

**Answer:**

No, the requirements for guards for existing equipment locations is governed by the code that was in effect at the time of the initial installation of the existing HVAC equipment. If existing equipment is replaced with new equipment in the same location, the location is unchanged and the requirements for guards continue to be dictated by the requirements of the prior code. If the new equipment is relocated to a different location, then the requirements for guards shall be as required by Section 304.11.

**Follow up Question #1:**

When were guards first required for rooftop mechanical equipment?

**Answer:**

Since the 1971 NC Mechanical Code. See reprint of Section 304.0 (f) below:

304.0-Appliances on Roofs

(f) The appliance shall be separated from the edge of a roof or similar hazard by a clearance of at least 6 feet; or by rigidly fixed rails, guards, parapets, or other building structures at least 4 feet in height.

This language has been included in the NC Code continuously since the 1971 Mechanical Code, although for one code cycle, the 2002 NC Code, the clearance requirement was changed to 10' but then by amendment was brought back down to the 6-foot requirement, and the 2006, 2009, and 2012 codes have retained this value.

**Keywords:**

replacement