

## INFORMAL CODE INTERPRETATION

NC Department of Insurance  
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division  
1202 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1202  
919-661-5880

### Guard Rails on Screened Porches

**Code:** 2012 Residential Code

**Date:** July 2, 2012

**Section:** R312

**Question:**

On a screened porch that has a floor more than 30" above the adjacent grade, are horizontal or vertical members required to prevent the passage of a 4" sphere?

**Answer:**

Section R312.2 requires that a guardrail shall be a minimum of 36 inches in height above the walking surface. Section R312.3 requires that vertical pickets shall be spaced no further than 4 inches apart. The guardrail is installed to prevent people or large objects from falling to the floor or grade below. The pickets are installed to prevent children or small objects from passing through the guardrail.

Screen may be accepted in accordance with Section 105 of the NC Administrative Code as an alternate method to replace the pickets provided all of the following conditions are met:

- Guardrails shall be installed horizontally at 36 inches and 18 inches above the walking surface.
- Guardrails shall be capable of resisting a 200 pound concentrated load applied in any direction at any point along the rail.
- The screen and the screen attachment shall be capable of resisting a 50 psf uniform live load (ref, Table R301.5) from the direction of the protected raised walking surface.

**Keywords:**

mesh