

INFORMAL CODE INTERPRETATION

NC Department of Insurance
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division
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Guard Height at Benches and Hot Tubs on Decks

Code: 2012 Residential Code

Date: July 2, 2012

Section: R312.1, R312.2

Question:

Should the guard height be increased when permanent or semi-permanent items such as benches or hot tubs are installed on decks?

Answer:

Yes. Section R312.2 specifically states; “*Required guards at open-sided walking surfaces, including stairs, porches, balconies or landings, shall be not less than 36 inches (914 mm) high measured vertically above the adjacent walking surface, adjacent fixed seating or the line connecting the leading edges of the treads.*”

The intent of the code is to protect persons from falling while in close proximity to the edge of an elevated surface. The R312.2 commentary states in part; “... *however, when fixed seating is adjacent to a guard the height of the guard is to be measured from the seat where children might be inclined to stand or walk.*” As a hot tub is an area where children play and are inclined to climb atop of, it is felt that the intent of the code is to require those adjacent to the guard meet the same requirements as seating.

Key Words:

pickets, guardrails, railing, rails