

INFORMAL CODE INTERPRETATION

NC Department of Insurance
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Guards On Retaining Walls

Code: 2012 Residential Code

Date: July 2, 2012

Section: R404.4

Question:

When are guards required on retaining walls?

Answer:

Section R101.2 of the 2012 Residential Code states; "Accessory structures except decks, gazebos, and retaining walls as required by Section R404.4, are not required to meet the provisions of this code." The Residential Code Commentary for this section states: "All decks and gazebos require permits along with retaining walls per section R404.4."

Section R404.4 requires engineering design for the following residential retaining walls and are therefore required to be permitted and inspected:

1. All retaining walls with an unbalanced condition exceeding 48 inches
2. All retaining walls that cross over property line
3. All retaining walls that support buildings and their accessory structures.

Section R312.1 states; "Guards shall be located along open-sided walking surfaces, including stairs, ramps and landings, that are located more than 30 inches (762 mm) measured vertically to the floor or grade below...." The Commentary for this section states: "The guard provisions of this code address the issue of providing protection for occupants from falling off of any elevated walking surface."

Guards complying with R312 must be included on any of the above mentioned retaining walls when the finished area on the high side of the wall is more than 30 inches above the grade below and part of an egress route or other dedicated walking surface.