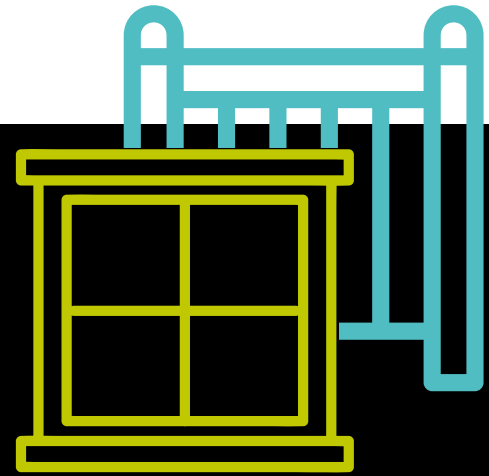


MANAGING RISK: RAILING AND WINDOW SAFETY



What is a baluster?

A baluster is a short pillar or column, typically decorative in design, arranged in a series supporting a rail or coping. Other commonly used names for a baluster are: spindle, stair stick, picket, and rail.

What is the current building code for baluster spacing?

In accordance with NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), open guards shall have intermediate rails or an ornamental pattern such that a sphere of 4 inches in diameter cannot pass through any opening up to a height of 34 inches.

Solutions for unsafe baluster spacing

If the balusters at your property are more than 4 inches apart, the preferred solution is to hire a licensed and insured contractor to reconfigure the slat spacing on railings to 4 inches or less, or protect the openings with substantial screening to avoid this entrapment hazard.

Here are some cost-effective solutions to make your railing safer (and not break the bank).

- Install any of the following on either side of the railing:
 - Mesh
 - Netting
 - Plexiglas
 - Wood or lattice panels
 - Banister guards
 - Add additional balusters between the existing ones so that the opening is less than 4 inches.



What is the current building code for railing height?

In accordance with NFPA, means of egress that are more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below shall be provided with guards to prevent falls over the open side. The guards should be no less than 42 inches high.

Best practices regarding railing safety

- Use vertical slat balusters for all railings. Horizontal or slanted railing balusters can act as an attractive nuisance and potentially invite children to climb on them.
- If placing furniture near the railing is unavoidable, post warning signs that advise to not climb on the furniture.
- Inspect railings and balusters regularly for any loose balusters or defects and fix the issues promptly.
- The baluster opening in the triangular area below the stair guard bottom rail and stair tread should have no more than a 4-inch opening.
- Do not place furniture on balconies near the railing.
- Guardrails must be able to resist a linear load of 50 pounds per linear foot. OSHA standard 1926.502(b) (3) requires guardrails to withstand 200-pound concentrated load.



Best practices regarding window safety

- Install window guards to prevent children and adults from falling out of windows.
- For windows on the 6th floor and below, install window guards that adults and older children can open easily in case of fire.
- For windows on the 7th floor and above, permanent window guards can be installed.
- If window guard installation is not an option, install window stops that permit windows to open no more than 4 inches.
- Never depend on screens to keep children and adults from falling out of windows.
- Keep furniture away from windows to discourage children from climbing near windows.

Sources

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