

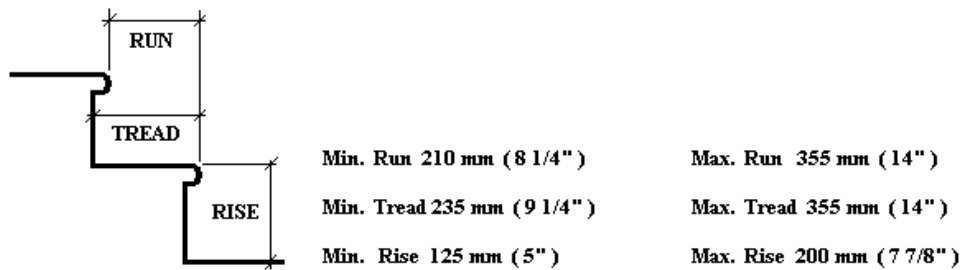
I am building an uncovered deck at my residence, what are the code requirements for the exterior stairs, handrails and guards?

The Alberta Building Code contains the following requirements:

Stairs

The maximum rise for stairs cannot exceed 200mm (7 7/8"). The rise is the distance measured vertically from one tread to the next. The minimum rise is 125 mm (5").

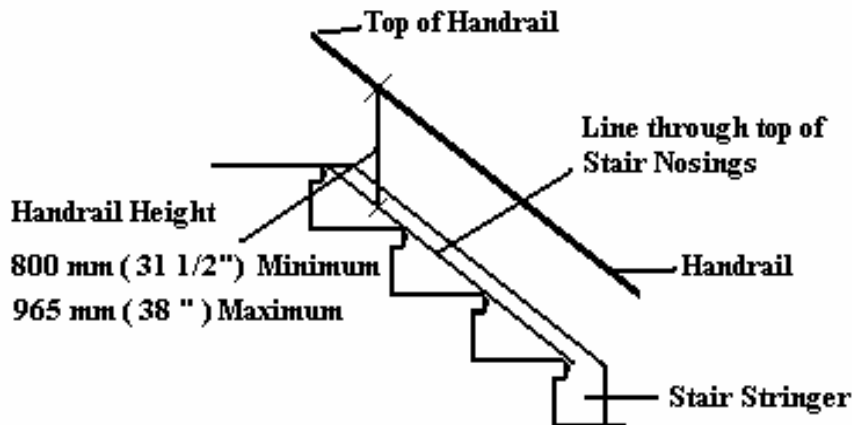
The minimum run for stairs is 210 mm (8 1/4"). The run is the depth of the tread less the nosing if a nosing is provided the maximum length of the nosing is 25 mm (1"). The minimum tread depth is 235 mm or (9 1/4") the maximum run for stairs is 355 mm (14").



Handrails

Handrails must be continually graspable along their entire length. At least one handrail is required on exterior stairs that have 4 risers or more.

The height of handrails is measured vertically from an imaginary line drawn through the edge of the stair nosing. Handrails shall be not less than 800 mm (31 1/2") high and not more than 965 mm (38") high. If the handrail is also acting as a guard on a landing the height must be 1070 mm (42") high.



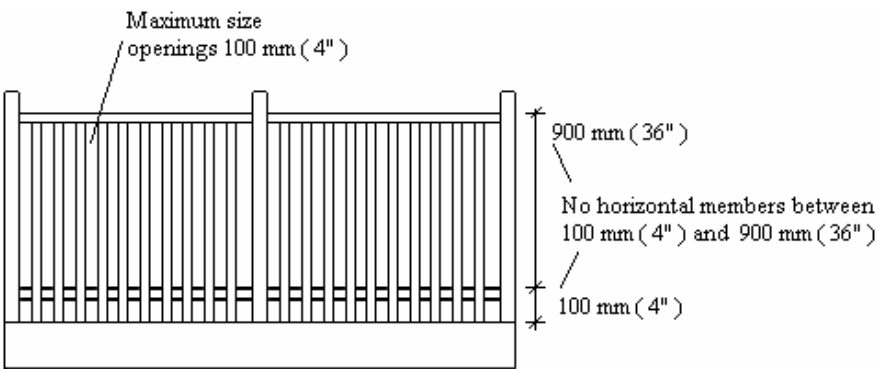
Guards

Guards are required on the open side of stairs where the difference in elevation from the stair and ground level exceeds 600 mm (24"). Guards are also required on decks and landings where the difference in elevation between the deck/landing and the ground exceeds 600 mm (24").

The minimum height of guards for stairs is 900 mm (36"). The minimum height of guards for decks is 900 mm when the difference in elevation between the deck and ground level is not more than 1800 mm. If the deck is higher the guards must be a minimum of 1070 mm (42"). The height of guards on landings must be 1070 mm (42") high.

Openings in guards cannot be large enough to allow the passage of a spherical object 100 mm (4") in diameter. This is to prevent the possibility of a child from getting their head stuck in the guards.

Guards must also be designed to prevent climbing. No part of the guard construction between 100 mm (4") and 900 mm (36") above the protected surface can facilitate climbing.



Always contact the local authority having jurisdiction prior to any construction activity and ensure your project complies with Alberta Safety Codes and local bylaws. Local authority and permit information may be accessed at:

www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/ss_permit.htm

If you require further information please contact Safety Services at:

Telephone: 1-866-421-6929

Email: safety.services@gov.ab.ca, or

On our website at: ["Ask the Expert"](#)