

What's the Risk?

Railings on Decks



THE ISSUE

Deck railings are an important safety feature and must be built according to the applicable building code. They must be the correct height, strong enough to support the loads placed on them, and built safely to prevent injuries especially to small children. Railings are mandatory for any deck that is 60 cm (24") above grade which is measured from the ground to the top of the deck.



WHAT'S THE RISK?

Deck railings can prevent injury and potential liability issues. Injuries due to falling from a deck can be significant. In Canada, the building code requires the distance between each spindle be no less than 10 cm (4") to prevent children from putting their heads through the openings. The railing cannot have horizontal slats that could be used as a ladder.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If your deck requires railings, here are factors to consider:

- Follow the building code when building or repairing a deck. Ideally, a licensed contractor should be used for all construction or repairs.
- Ensure railings and associated parts on the deck and stairs are strong enough to support the loads placed on them and are the appropriate height.
- Inspect deck surfaces, steps, railings, and spindles on a regular basis (monthly) to ensure they are strong and secure.
- Have a licensed contractor inspect the supports of elevated decks annually.



Railings not to code.



Railings built to code.

Note: this document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to replace actual code requirements. Building codes and standards change regularly. As well, individual municipalities may have specific deck-related requirements so it is critical to get a building permit before starting work on a deck and seek out professional help when building or repairing a deck.

