

# Stairway Safety

Stairs may be the most dangerous area of your home. Falls account for the most injuries around the home and any of those are related to stairs. The rules and requirements related to stairs, handrails, guardrails, etc are very complex. This page is intended to give a brief overview of some of the more common issues. These rules are based on buildings with a load occupancy of less than 10 people.

## Terminology

- Tread - The horizontal step surface
- Riser - The vertical height component between steps
- Landing - A flat surface at least as wide as the stairway (or doorway) by at least 36" long
- Handrail - A graspable rail along the stairway
- Guardrail - The barrier along the edge of a stairway, landing, hallway or deck.
- Baluster - The vertical components of a guardrail

## Basic Safety Guidelines:

- The risers should not exceed 8" and should not vary by more than 3/8"
- The treads should be at least 9" deep and should not vary by more than 3/8"
- Headroom should be at least 6' 8"
- A graspable handrail should be installed at any location with 4 or more risers
- A guardrail should be installed at any location more than 24" off the floor/ground
- The space between guardrail components should not exceed 4"
- A landing should be installed at the top and bottom of the stairs
- A door or gate should not open over the stairs or a landing (screen door is OK)
- The step down onto a landing outside a door should not exceed 8"
- Lighting should be installed over stairways with a switch at the top and bottom of the stairs

