



Miami Beach Fire Department
FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION
STANDARDS



TOPIC: Balcony Guardrails

STANDARD NO: EXINSP -S08
Revision 0

This FPS is issued to clarify the requirements for existing guardrails in individual balconies serving a dwelling unit.

In the past, we have cited existing guardrails to comply with the 42-inch height requirement based on NFPA 101, Section 7.1.8 and 7.2.2.4.5. Recently, NFPA provided a written interpretation stating that the balcony of an individual dwelling unit is treated as a room or space within the dwelling unit. Therefore, the following exception would apply to these guardrails.

7.2.2.4.5.2 Guards shall be not less than 42 inches high, except as permitted by one of the following: (1) Existing guardrails within dwelling units shall be permitted to be not less than 36 inch high.

Existing buildings with existing guardrails on the balconies can remain at 36 inches in height. No violation can be issued. If the balconies are renovated and new guardrails are installed, then the guardrails must comply with the 42-inch height since the exception above is only for existing guardrails.

Newly-constructed buildings designed and approved (certificate of occupancy) with a guardrail of 42-inch in height must maintain the guardrail at 42 inches high.

For apartment occupancies, Section 31.2.1.1 states that means of egress from dwelling units to the outside of the building shall be in accordance with Chapter 7 and Section 7.2.2.4.5.2(1) grants the exception for a height of 36 inches. For hotel occupancies, Section 29.2.1.1.1 states that means of egress from guest rooms or guest suites to the outside of the building shall be in accordance with Chapter 7 and Section 7.2.2.4.5.2(4) grants the exception for a height of 36 inches.

During plan review for installation of new guardrails on these balconies, the height of the guardrail shall be 42-inches high and openings shall comply with the 4-inch sphere rule. During plan review for a change of occupancy from an existing apartment occupancy to a hotel occupancy or vice-versa, the height of the guardrail shall be 42-inches high and openings shall comply with the 4-inch sphere rule.


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Fire Marshal

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