

Rental Housing Information re Handrail, Guardrail and Stair Code Requirements
Please remember that all new stairways/decks are now required to have proper footings.

From City of Marshalltown's Housing Code, Chapter 15.5 HOUSING CODE: Sec. 15.5-42:

(h) Structurally sound handrails shall be provided on any steps containing three risers or more. If steps are not enclosed, handrails and intermediate rails of an ornamental pattern shall be utilized such that no object four inches in diameter can pass through. Handrails shall be not less than 30 inches above the nosing of the treads. Porches or balconies located more than 30 inches higher than the adjacent areas shall have structurally sound guardrails 36 to 42 inches high and if unenclosed, balusters, intermediate rails or an ornamental pattern used as previously discussed in this subsection.

Guardrails – The following applies to all guardrails, whether it is for stair landings, balconies, porches or etc., when guardrail is 30" or more above grade:

- Guardrail height 36" for a single-family dwelling or duplex
 - Unless it empties into a common area, then must be 42" high.
- Guardrail height for buildings with 3 or more units must be 42" high
- Spaces between the guardrails must be 4 3/8" or less.
- Spaces between the bottom rail of the guard rail and the decking/floor must be 4" or less.

Handrails – The following applies to all handrails for any steps with 3 risers or more:

- Handrail required when there are three risers or more.
- Handrail height from nose of tread is 34" to 38" and be consistent. (*Nose of tread* which is considered the front of the tread.
- Handrail distance from wall shall be no less than 1 1/2".
- Handrail cross section shall be no less than 1 1/4" or more than 2" and have no sharp corners and easily grippable.
- One handrail for steps 44" wide or less and if serving single-family dwelling.
- Two handrails for steps in multifamily building or when 44" or wider.
- The following applies when the area of the handrail is adjacent to an area below 30" or more.
- Openings/Spaces between the side rails of a handrail must be 4 3/8" or less.
- Space between the bottom rail of the handrail and the stair tread must be 6" or less.

Stair Information:

- All stairs must have a minimum rise of at least 4".
- The maximum rise is 7 3/4".
- All steps must have a minimum run of 10".
- **However, each rise and run must be consistent. So if a run is 10", each and every run on that stairway must be 10". If the rise is 5" for one riser, then each and every run on that stairway must be 5".**

Stairway, guardrail, etc. diagram below.

Handrail diagram below

