

## Guardrails

There are two basic types of guardrails – the perimeter guardrail (i.e., found on flat roofs, upper stories before framing walls) and floor opening guardrails. Both are constructed the same way and are designed to provide the same type of protection.

### Guardrails

#### When are they required?

- All open-sided floors or floor openings exposing workers to a fall of four feet or greater.

#### Standard Specifications

- The top rail should be 42” high and constructed of 2”x 4” stock wood.
- The intermediate (or mid rail) should be 21” (also using 2”x 4”).
- The bottom rail or toeboard should be at least 4” in vertical height from the floor to the top of the toeboard.
- Uprights will be 2”x 4” at 8’ centers at a minimum.
- All components must withstand a load test of 200 pounds at any point.

#### General Rules

- Install guardrails properly the first time and reduce the amount of maintenance.
- Install as you go—don’t wait and then have to catch up.
- Regularly inspect all rails.

#### Missing or Weakened Guardrails

Sometimes sections of guardrails must be taken down so that materials or equipment can be brought in. These sections often aren't replaced or are hastily thrown back up.

Weakened guardrails are sometimes more dangerous than no guardrails at all, because they give a false sense of security.

#### Follow these Rules

1. As you go about your job, get into the habit of checking guardrails. If you discover a weakened or a missing rail or section, correct the situation if you can. Otherwise, report it so that the hazard can be eliminated.
2. If you bump a rail with material or equipment, check it at once if you suspect you may have weakened it. If you discover you've broken a rail, upright, or toe board, repair it if you can. Otherwise, report it so that it can be repaired.

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3. When repairing or replacing guardrails, remember you're exposed to the very danger that you are providing protection against. Perhaps you should be using a safety belt and lanyard.

### **Keep your Guard (Rails) Up**

Different types of construction may require different types of guardrails. But the points we've covered today apply to all. If you have suggestions, make them known so that we can continue to keep our guardrails up and our accidents down.

Anyone repairing a guardrail at elevated heights should be wearing their Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS) and be tied off to an anchor point.

Enforce replacement by subcontractors when they remove them.

### **Remember**

Guardrails are designed to protect you from falling from one level to another. If the guardrail is defective or not there at all, then you are exposed to serious injury or even death.

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