



New Castle County Government Center
87 Reads Way
New Castle, DE 19720
Department of Land Use - Building Inspections

Date: **November 29, 2010**
Subject: **Required guard locations**
References: **2007 Supplement to the International Codes**

This Staff Code Interpretation is intended to be used to clarify Section R312.1 (Guards) in the above referenced Code Edition.

Below is the exact text from the section of the 2007 Supplement to the International Codes in question.

Section R312.1, Guards. Guards shall be provided on all decks, landings, porches, balconies, ramps, or raised floor surfaces located more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below. Required guards shall not be less than 36 inches in height. Open sides of stairs with a total rise of more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below shall have guards not less than 34 inches in height measured vertically from the nosing of the treads. Porches and decks which are enclosed with insect screening shall be equipped with guards where the walking surface is located more than 30 inches above then floor or grade below.

Question: What is considered a raised floor surface? For example, an inground pool has a concrete apron around it and is located more than 30 inches above the grade below, the pool apron continues all the way to the edge where it drops off to the grade below. Would a guard be required at this location? A planter box is installed at the edge to stop a person from being able to walk all the way to the edge, the planter box is approx 22" wide and is approx 12" high. It does not meet the requirements for a guard.

Answer: The requirements for a guard, as prescribed in Section R312.1, are not applicable for site conditions that are beyond the required means of egress elements of a building. The above described apron has the potential of serving as such an element, however, the proposed planter serves as a buffer and thus the walking surface of the apron is separated from the adjacent grade. And a guard is not required.

STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION

NCC Stance: The guard requirements in the Code are intended to be applied along the egress path from the structure to the exterior grade. While safety concerns might suggest otherwise, areas associated with grading and other site conditions which could typically trigger the guard requirements of the IRC are beyond the scope of the International Residential Code. For instance, a raised wood deck at an above ground pool or a free standing gazebo would be required to comply with the Guard requirements, but those same requirements could not be applied to a landscaped retaining wall with a height above grade of greater than 30 inches.

Code Updates: The adoption of the 2015 IRC has not changed this section.

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Code Official