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Subchapter 7. General Industry Safety Orders  
Group 1. General Physical Conditions and Structures Orders  
Article 2. Standard Specifications

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## **§3209. Standard Guardrails.**

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Wherever guardrail protection is required, the following standards shall be adhered to except that other types and arrangements of guardrail construction will be acceptable where the height, surface and end projection of the top rail complies with the standard specifications and the closure of the vertical area between the top rail and floor, platform, runway, or ramp provides protection at least equivalent to that afforded by a mid-rail.

(a) A standard guardrail shall consist of top rail, midrail or equivalent protection, and posts, and shall have a vertical height within the range of 42 inches to 45 inches from the upper surface of the top rail to the floor, platform, runway, or ramp level. (Note: the permissible tolerance on height dimensions is one inch). The top rail shall be smooth-surfaced throughout the length of the railing. The midrail shall be approximately halfway between the top rail and the floor, platform, runway, or ramp. The ends of the rails shall not overhang the terminal posts, except where such overhang does not constitute a projection hazard. (Title 24, Part 2, Section 2-1716(a)).

Note: Local building regulations may require 9-inch spacing of midrails.

(b) All guardrails and other permissible types, including their connections and anchorage, shall be designed for a live load of 20 pounds per linear foot applied either horizontally or vertically downward at the top rail. Dimensional details of railing members of a few types of construction which comply with this strength requirement are given hereinafter in subsection (c).

Note: It is recognized that the minimum value of railing strength here specified is inadequate for safety under operating conditions where railings are liable to receive heavy stresses from crowds, trucking, handling materials, etc. For such conditions, additional strength shall be provided by use of heavier stock, closer spacing of posts, bracing, or otherwise.

Railing members shall be framed in such a position that they will afford the greatest support and protection, for example, top rails of structural steel angles shall have the outside face of vertical leg located on the side adjacent to the side of normal contact by the employee. (Title 24, Part 2, Section 2-1716(b).)

(c) The following are some acceptable guardrail specifications: other combinations will be accepted as long as equivalent strength and protection are maintained.

(1) In wooden construction, the posts to be of at least 2-inch by 4-inch nominal material spaced not to exceed 6 feet, the top rails to be smooth with corners rounded and not less than 2-inch by 4-inch nominal material. The posts may be spaced on 8-foot centers if the top rails consist of double 1-inch by 4-inch nominal boards, provided that 1 board is fastened in a flat position on top of the posts and the other is fastened in an edge-up position to the inside of the posts and the side of the top board. Single midrails, where permitted, shall be not less than 2-inch by 4-inch nominal material and installed on the contact side of the guardrail.

(2) If constructed of standard metal pipe, the top rails and single midrail, where permitted, to be 1 1/2-inch outside diameter or larger. The posts to be 1 1/2-inch outside diameter or larger, the spacing not to exceed 8 feet.

(3) Guardrails installed on or before May 26, 2011. If constructed of structural metal, the top rails to be angle iron of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 1/4-inch angles or other metal shapes of equivalent bending strength; and the single midrail, where permitted, to be iron or steel of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 1/4-inch angles or other metal shapes of equivalent strength. The posts to be angle iron of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 1/4-inch stock, the spacing not to exceed 8 feet.

(4) Guardrails installed after May 26, 2011. If constructed of structural metal, the top rails to be angle iron of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 3/8-inch angles or other metal shapes of equivalent bending strength; and the single midrail, where permitted, to be iron or steel of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 3/8-inch angles or other metal shapes of equivalent strength. The posts to be angle iron of at least 2-inch by 2-inch by 3/8-inch stock, the spacing not to exceed 8 feet.

(d) Where toeboards are required, they shall be constructed of wood, concrete, metal, or other suitable material. Where constructed of metal grille, mesh shall not exceed 1-inch. The top of the toeboard shall be not less than 3 1/2 inches above the platform, walkway, or other working level and the bottom clearance shall not exceed 1/4-inch.

Note: Where materials are piled, higher toeboards, or paneling from floor to intermediate rails or top rail shall be provided where necessary for safety. (Title 24, Part 2, Section 2-1753.)

Note: Authority cited: [Section 142.3, Labor Code](#). Reference: [Section 142.3, Labor Code](#); and [Section 18943\(c\), Health and Safety Code](#).

## HISTORY

1. Amendment of subsection (c)(1) filed 1-18-78; effective thirtieth day thereafter (Register 78, No. 3). For prior history, see Register 77, No. 41.
2. Repealer of NOTE in subsection (c)(4) filed 1-23-81; effective thirtieth day thereafter (Register 81, No. 4).
3. Amendment filed 5-25-83; effective thirtieth day thereafter (Register 83, No. 22). Approved by State Building Standards Commission 1-24-83.
4. Amendment of subsection (c)(3) and new subsection (c)(4) filed 4-26-2011; operative 5-26-2011 (Register 2011, No. 17).

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