

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0071

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: March 16, 2021

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2018

Subject: Handrail Graspability

Keywords: Handrail, Continuously, Continually

Building Code Reference(s): 9.8.7.2.(1), 9.8.7.5.(2)

Question:

In a building regulated by Division B, Part 9, must a required stair handrail be continuously graspable?

Interpretation:

Yes.

Sentence 9.8.7.2.(1) states that required handrails must be continuously graspable throughout the length of ramps and flights of stairs, with the exception of stairs or ramps serving a single dwelling unit where the handrail can be interrupted by a newel post on the bottom tread. This exception does not affect the requirement for the handrail to be continuously graspable.

Article 9.8.7.5. is titled "Ergonomic Design". Sentence 9.8.7.5.(2) requires all handrails to be continually graspable along their entire length with no obstruction on or above them to break a handhold. Sentence 9.8.7.2.(1) uses the term "continuously" but Sentence 9.8.7.5.(2) uses "continually".

The Note A-9.8.7.5.(2) describes the intent of the continual graspability requirement, to allow a person's fingers and thumbs to curl under part or all of the handrail. The continual graspability is part of the ergonomic design and is intended to ensure that all parts of the handrail are graspable. The requirement for continual graspability is not intended to modify the requirement of Sentence 9.8.7.2.(1) for a required handrail to be continuously graspable throughout its entire length.



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, EGBC and BOABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The Building and Safety Standards Branch, Province of BC and the City of Vancouver participate in the committee's proceedings with respect to interpretations of the BC Building Code. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the *local Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.

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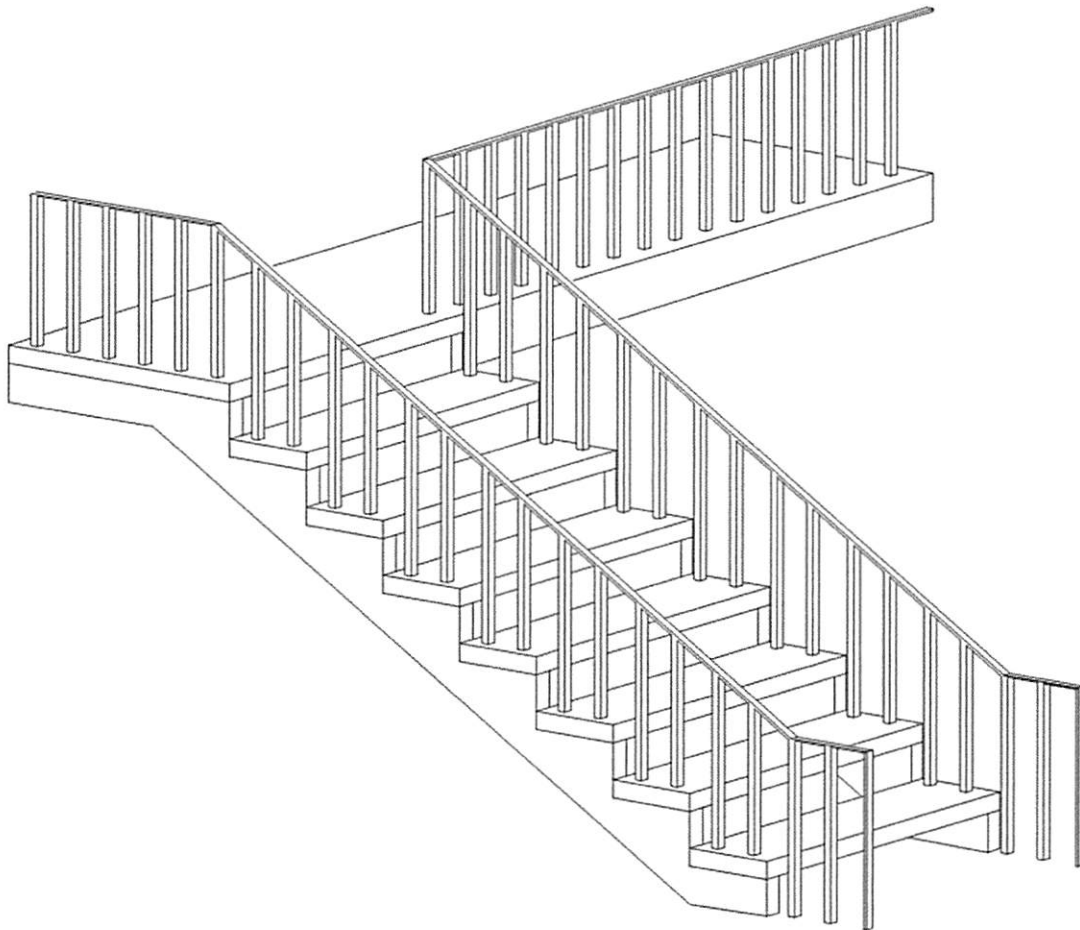
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The sketch below indicates a handrail that is NOT acceptable, because the vertical pickets are the same width as the railing that serves as a combined handrail and the top of the guard, and the pickets interrupt the graspability.



Pat Shek

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