BOD 21-04: Guards at Occupied Roofs

2019 OSSC 1015.2 and 503.1.4

QUESTION: Guards are required along "open-sided walking surfaces" that are located more than 30" above the adjacent floor surface or grade at any point within 36" measured horizontally to the edge of the open side. Are guards required when an occupied roof deck is located more than 36" from the edge of the roof?

RESPONSE: The 2019 OSSC does not define "walking surfaces" or limit the location of guards to the areas of the roof intended for occupants. Many occupied roof decks are adjacent to vegetative plantings, gravel, or single-ply roof surfaces that are "walkable." The City of Portland will allow the following options as a barrier to delineate the walking areas for occupants on a roof level.

1. A minimum 42" high guard meeting requirements in Section 1015.4 at the edge of the deck or at some point between the occupied roof and the edge of the roof. Often the parapet at the edge of the roof is at least 42" above the roof surface and meets the guard requirements.
2. A minimum 36" high guard measured from the higher walking surface constructed as to prevent passage of a 21" diameter sphere at the edge of the occupied roof deck.
3. A minimum 24" high and 16" wide permanent planter with vegetation.

Options 1 and 2 must meet Section 1607.8.1 structural requirements for guards. Option 3 must meet Section 1607.8.1.2 only.

This Building Official Determination is only applicable to roofs accessible to and usable by occupants of the building and is not needed for roofs accessed only for service or maintenance. Building code requirements are intended to identify reasonable safeguards for health, safety, welfare, comfort, and security for Portland's residents but are minimal requirements only. Building owners may elect to use more substantial barriers for keeping occupants in protected areas.

Effective Date	Significant Changes	Employee Name
6/10/2021	Implementation	T. Whitehill