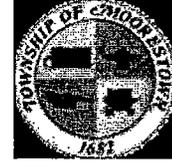


# RESIDENTIAL DECKS



## A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR A PERMIT

Constructing an outdoor deck onto your home is a very popular home improvement project. This information packet has been designed to assist homeowners to prepare their permit application when they are designing an outdoor deck project themselves for their own private residence. The topics covered will include the following:

1. The application itself.
2. Preparing plans.
3. Building elements such as footings, framing, stairs, and guardrails.
4. Required inspections.

Whether you are planning on doing the work yourself or hiring a contractor, this information will assist you so that your application process can go smoothly and ensure that all aspects of the project have been accounted for during your planning phase.

**It is not the intention of this information sheet to teach you how to design your project.** There are far too many variables in design and construction methods to be covered in this type of format. Please see the "More Information" section at the end of this document for a list of resources that may be of further help to you.

## PERMIT APPLICATION

### Getting Started



By now you should have received your permit application jacket along with several forms. These forms are provided and governed by the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code, otherwise known as the UCC or Administrative Code. This code is regulated by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and is the law that governs the permitting process throughout the state. If there are any plan review comments from the Construction Department that pertain to the Administrative Code, they will be noted on all correspondence as NJAC 5:23.

The first form is the Construction Permit Application (Form F100-1) which is the manila folder that contains the other forms. Make sure that boxes 1 and 2 are filled out as completely as possible. If you are designing the project yourself, and/or you plan on doing all of the work yourself, then simply put "self" as principle contractor and/or architect or engineer. Next, inside the folder you will find "Certification in Lieu of Oath." This page must be signed by either the homeowner, (if the homeowner is the designer), or the agent, (if the design is made by a NJ licensed architect).

**Home improvement contractors are not authorized to design your project for you.**

## ZONING

An exterior deck requires approval from the Zoning Department, so you will find a Zoning Application form in your packet. Make sure this form is filled out as completely as possible. The zoning department will require a plot plan or survey of your entire property with the location of the proposed deck highlighted on the drawing. Be sure to include the distances of the outside edges of the proposed deck to the property lines and any adjacent properties or structures. Any questions about this form or your plot plan should be addressed to the Zoning Department.

## PREPARING PLANS

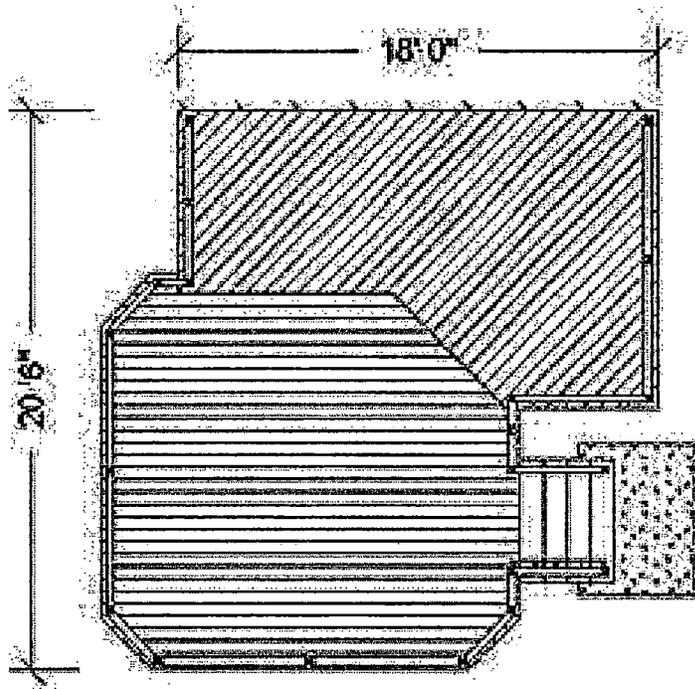
Your application must include pictures of what you intend your outdoor deck to look like when it is completed. It doesn't need to be a great work of art, but it does need to be drawn to scale and contain enough details so that we can make sure that all of the elements you intend to include meet or exceed the code standards (see the UCC code citation to the right). Clarity is more important than neatness.

To show compliance with the Building code, please include plan drawings and section drawings.

**NJAC 5:23-2.15(f)1:** Plans and specifications. The application for the permit shall be accompanied by no fewer than two copies of the specifications and of plans drawn to scale, with sufficient clarity and detail dimensions to show the nature and character of the work to be performed. Plans submitted shall be required to show only such detail and include only such information as shall be necessary to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the code and these regulations or to facilitate inspections for code conformity.

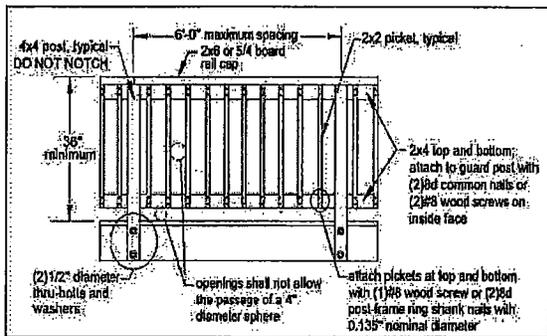
### PLAN DRAWING

A plan drawing is the overhead view of the deck. Locations of walls, door, stairs, railings or any other permanent elements should be shown on this drawing (See the example below). All the specific information that is required will be covered in the next section.



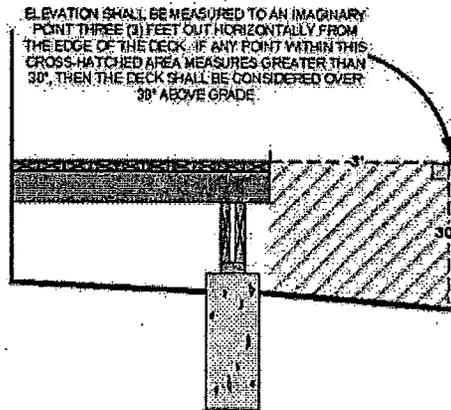
## GUARDRAILS AND STAIRS

Guardrails are only required on decks that are 30 inches or greater from grade. See the image to the right to determine whether your project will be required to have a guardrail. Guardrails are required to be at least 36 inches high and have no greater than 4 inch openings anywhere on the guard (see the example below).

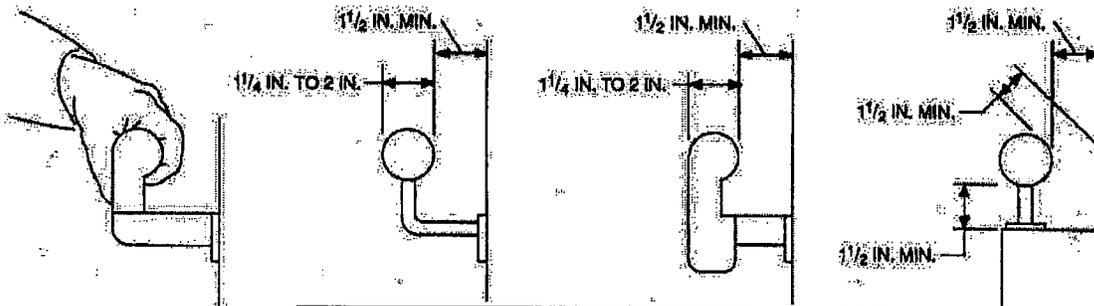
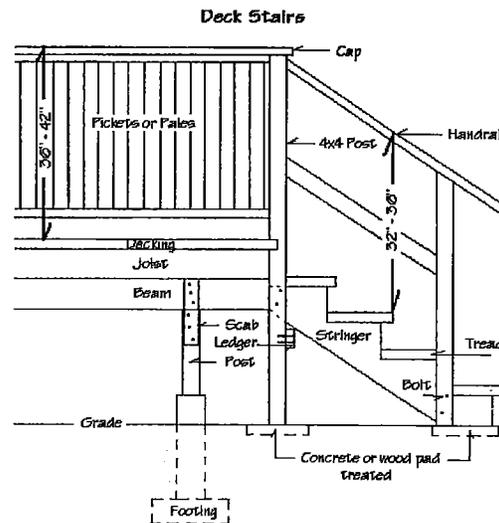


## MEASURING TO GRADE

HOW TO MEASURE THE HEIGHT OF YOUR DECK



Stairs shall have uniform dimensions for treads (no less than 9 inches) and risers (no greater than 8 1/4 inches), have a level area or landing at the top and bottom of the flight that is at least 36" long in the direction of travel, and have a graspable handrail if the flight contains four or more risers. See examples of graspable handrails below.



Please note: The images in this packet are for illustration purposes only and the dimensions shown may be based on older, out-of-date codes. Your design should be checked against the current 2018 IRC-NJ version.

## MORE INFORMATION...

Hopefully, the information in this publication has been useful to you to help conceptualize your outdoor deck project. The following is a list of additional resources you can utilize to assist you in preparing your plans for your project.

### **INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE 2018 (NJ EDITION)**

The IRC 2018 is the adopted code for single family homes in the State of New Jersey. The specific code sections that should be carefully understood with regards to outdoor deck projects are the following:

#### **SECTION R507 EXTERIOR DECKS**

##### **R311.7 Stairways**

##### **R312.1 Guards**

A read-only version of the 2018 IRC can be viewed at the following website:

<https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/NJRC2018P2>

### **AMERICAN WOOD COUNCIL**

The American Wood Council's publication, "Design for Code Acceptance (DCA) 6 - Prescriptive Residential Deck Construction Guide" is an excellent source of information that provides details and illustrations for residential decks. Best of all, you can view this publication online for free!

It is important to remember, however, that the free publication is based on the 2012 building codes and there are details in the publication that do not precisely align with the most current codes. The best way to use this publication is to design your project using their guidelines and then check your design against the codes in the IRC above.

The link to the AWC publication is found here:

<http://www.awc.org/codes-standards/publications/dca6>

### **RETAIL DESIGN CENTER:**

Many home centers and project centers have qualified designers who can help lay out your project plus provide scale renderings. Just remember that any drawings that are furnished to you by the home center are **your** designs. You must sign the drawings and submit them with your application as your own. The home center is not authorized to submit permit applications or drawings for you on your behalf. Also, renderings that are furnished by design centers are often missing crucial code related details that you will need to add for plan review.

### **HIRE A PROFESSIONAL DESIGNER:**

If you don't feel comfortable designing your own project or if your vision for your deck is more complicated than you can handle, you can always hire a NJ licensed Architect to do it for you. The advantage of hiring a design professional is that their drawings may be submitted with your application and you don't have to draw the designs yourself, plus, you can take advantage of a professional who has years of experience and may be able to incorporate design elements that you may not have thought of.