



One of the more common WISHA citations is for lack of or improperly erected guardrails. There are two basic types of guardrails:

Perimeter guardrails (i.e., found on flat roofs, upper stories before framing walls) and

Floor opening guardrails.

Both are constructed the same way and are designed to provide the same type of protection. See [WAC 296-880-4005](http://www.wa.gov/leg/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-880-4005)

Recommendations

The following items should be reviewed when discussing guardrails:

When are they required?

All open-sided floors or floor openings exposing workers to a fall of four feet or greater.

Standard Specifications

- The top rail should be 42" high and constructed of 2"x4" stock wood.
- The intermediate (or mid rail) should be 21" (also using 2"x4").

-The bottom rail (toeboard) should be at least 4" high from the floor to the top of the toeboard.

-Uprights must be 2"x4" at 8' centers (at a minimum).

-All components must withstand a load test of 200 pounds at any point.

General Rules

Install guardrails properly the first time and reduce the amount of maintenance.

Install as you go—don't wait and then find you need to catch up.

Regularly inspect all rails.

Additional Recommendations:

Anyone repairing a guardrail at elevated heights should be wearing their Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS) and be tied off to an anchor point.

Enforce replacement by subcontractors if they remove guardrails.

Finally: Guardrails are designed to protect you from falling from one level to another. If the guardrail is defective or not there at all, then you are exposed to serious injury or even death.