



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division of Code Enforcement and Administration
Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code - 2002 Edition

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Source Document: 19 NYCRR 1220: Residential Code of New York State (RCNYS)

Code Section: R315: Handrails

Question: Does the code permit handrails on a stair to be interrupted by a newel post and the newel post at the top to be directly over the riser?

Answer: YES.

RCNYS section R315.1, *handrails*, states that handrails having minimum and maximum heights of 34 inches and 38 inches (864 mm and 965 mm), respectively, measured vertically from the nosing of the treads, shall be provided on at least one side of stairways. All required handrails shall be continuous the full length of the stairs with two or more risers from a point directly above the top riser of a flight to a point directly above the lowest riser of the flight. Ends shall be returned or shall terminate in newel posts or safety terminals. Handrails adjacent to a wall shall have a space of not less than 1.5 inches (38 mm) between the wall and the handrail.

However, the RCNYS has a typographical error whereby the following exceptions were not printed in the code book:

1. Handrails shall be permitted to be interrupted by a newel post at a turn.
2. The use of a volute, turnout or starting easing shall be allowed over the lowest tread.

The ICC commentary for this code section reads as follows:

The two exceptions to this section create situations where the graspable portion of the handrail may not end up being completely continuous from top riser to bottom riser. These traditional situations have been routinely accepted in the past and therefore, are permitted by the code.

Therefore, the handrail can be interrupted where it butts the newel post. The top of the newel post can be above handrail height and a newel post may be installed at the bottom riser, at the top riser, and at each turn. The exception allows the newel post to be a continuation of the handrail system. Since the newel post is directly above the top riser, it is our opinion that this handrail complies with section R315.1.