



OSHA Stairs or IBC Stairs? What's the Difference and Which One Does Your Worksite Need?

Before investing in industrial stairs, you'll need to determine what local building code requires of your business and application. For work sites or areas that are open to the public (including seniors and children) and high-traffic, higher standards often ascribed to IBC are required. If your structure or facility is government-owned or a factory, OSHA is more commonly utilized.

Once you've determined which type of stairs local building code requires, the differences between OSHA and IBC come down to roughly seven different factors:

Horizontal Run

Horizontal run refers to the length of the stairwell. With OSHA stairs, the horizontal run is approximately equal to the height of the deck. For example, if the mezzanine deck height is 10 feet, the stairwell is also 10 feet long.

Conversely, IBC stairs have a horizontal run that is approximately 1.5 times the deck height, excluding landings or handrail extenders. Thus, a 10-foot high mezzanine deck would have approximately a 15-foot long stairwell.

Risers, Tread, and Stair Width

Regarding risers and tread, OSHA stairs typically have an 8-inch open riser and a 9-inch tread. OSHA stair width is generally a minimum of 22 inches.

IBC stairs generally have a 7-inch closed riser and an 11-inch tread. For stair width, expect a minimum of 44 inches in most cases and 36 inches in areas populated on average by less than 50 people.

Guardrails and Handrails

Guardrails are required on the open sides of stairwells with OSHA, and a handrail is required at least on one side, preferably the right side, descending at 34-inches high. IBC stairs require guardrails of 42-inches high and handrails of 34-inches high on both sides of the stairwell.

Landings

More similar in landing requirements, both OSHA and IBC require landings at the top and bottom of the stairs. However, you'll find IBC landings are larger, approximately four feet square.

IBC also has the additional requirement of adding an intermediate landing on stairwells more than 12-foot high, as well as handrail extensions on the bottom landing.

Cost/Footprint

Another significant difference is the cost and footprint between the two types of stairs. IBC does require a larger footprint than OSHA stairs, primarily because the treads are deeper and more numerous. IBC stairs take up more room and stretch out further, too, taking up more space. With the additional handrails and extensions required, the price also escalates.

OSHA stairs require less treads, a shorter horizontal run, and less extra railing, allow for a shorter, steeper stair that can generally save companies up to 30% in cost and several feet of stair length.

W. W. Cannon Tailors Industrial Stairs to Your Specific Application

We don't leave you in the dark when it comes to deciding on OSHA stairs or IBC stairs. We'll offer customized sizing, tread depths, angles, and space requirements all based on your individual application and workspace.

