Safety of Cable Railing Defended

In an article titled "Rod Railings" (May/June 07), it was stated "... horizontal cables form a ladder that is dangerous for children to climb." As a participant in the process of having the "ladder effect" wording removed from the 2000 International Residential Code (IRC), I know of no data to support the contention that horizontal cable is directly related to an epidemic of guard-climbing injuries in young children.

If the editors have data that indicates otherwise, they should forward it to the International Code Council's Code Technology Committee (CTC). The CTC has spent the past two years reviewing this issue and would appreciate evidence that "horizontal cables form a ladder that is dangerous for children to climb."

Your publication of this statement is a disservice to your advertisers and the railing industry. I hope you will consider a retraction and a future article relating the ongoing discussion of this topic and how it affects your readers.

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Both the National Ornamental & Miscellaneous Metals Association (NOMMA) and the ICC Code Technology Committee are doing extensive research on the topic of rail and guard climbability. We are unaware of any study that identifies cable rail as a specific hazard to children.

Dr. Gregory Istre of the Injury Prevention Center of Greater Dallas conducted one of the best-known studies on this topic ("Childhood Injuries Due to Falls From Apartment Balconies and Windows," *Injury Prevention,* 2003). The Istre study reveals that most injuries involving children interacting with guards and rails occur in older developments, where the spacing of rail elements is greater than 4 inches, thereby allowing a child to fall through.

In addition, our research reveals that furniture located next to guards is easily climbed and creates a significant hazard to unattended children. To educate the public on this and other known dangers, NOMMA has a child safety area at www.nomma.org.

By their very nature, cable rails do not invite climbing because the thin cable is hard to grasp and stand on, and the material is flexible. NOMMA maintains that the best way to maximize guard safety is to follow the current ICC codes, especially in regard to height, strength, and spacing between infill elements, and to *never* allow unattended children on balconies, porches, or stairs, regardless of the design.

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