



HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE NOTE

SPIKE TOPPED RAILINGS - RISK ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Spike topped railings are prevalent in many educational and other establishments throughout the country. Their existence does not mean in itself that we have a high risk at these premises and therefore need to take physical action. However this may be the case at some premises.

The risk from such railings will depend on a number of factors for example, location, user groups, type of railing, how well protected. This note provides information to assist educational establishments in assessing the level of risk and subsequent action necessary to control the risk from these items.

TYPES OF RAILINGS

A number of different types exist and they have been split into three risk ratings, high medium and low. The photographs below will assist with the classification.

High Risk Railings

Railings of the type shown below are considered high risk due to the very sharp spikes and the fact they are mounted on a low wall with rounded edging. They attract children who climb onto the wall and put arms over the top. The likelihood of such activity happening is high and the level of injury very severe. This is especially the case when they are adjacent to play areas or areas where parents and children gather before and after school.



Medium Risk Railings

These railings also have sharp spikes, however the likelihood of injury is less due to their height. A child would have to make a determined effort to scale these railings.



Low Risk Railings

Due to the snub nosed style the likelihood of impalement is reduced. This is true whether they are on a low wall or full length.



LOCATION/PROTECTION

Another important factor to consider is the location of the railings. For example, high risk types, if located such that children will not come into contact, present no risk and require no action. However when they are located in play areas the reverse is the case. In addition, if high risk railings are protected, for example by foliage or other means, then they present a low risk (see photo below).



WHAT ACTION DO I NEED TO TAKE?

1. Check if you have spike topped railings on your site.
2. If you have, consider their type, location, proximity to children and potential for intruders to climb.
3. Based on your findings take action along the following lines:
 - a. High risk railings near play areas - these will require action to remove the tops or to be made safe in some other way, e.g. remove, provide foliage, protect.
 - b. Medium risk railings - consider frequency of intrusion, if regular, take action as at a. above.
 - c. Other medium or low risk railings - raise pupil awareness and ensure adequate supervision during play periods.

The recent injury was very serious indeed requiring the Fire Service to assist in freeing the child from the railings. We would urge establishment heads to consider carrying out these assessments at their earliest convenience.

Further information can be gained from the Departmental H&S Team 01603 223989 or 01603 223470.