



## COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

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DEPARTMENT OF  
DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES  
Division of  
Building Development

### BUILDING OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION 2015-05

March 09, 2020

**CODE/EDITION:** VIRGINIA UNIFORM STATEWIDE BUILDING CODE/2015

**SECTION(S):** IBC/2015, Section 1003 General Means of Egress  
IBC/2015, Section 1003.4 Floor Surface  
IBC/2015, Section 1011 Stairways  
IBC/2015, Section 1011.7.1 Stairway Walking Surfaces

#### QUESTION:

1. Is the walking surface of an elevated exterior walkway that is part of the means of egress allowed to have openings in the walking surface?
2. If allowed, what is the maximum size of the openings in the walking surface?

#### ANSWER:

1. Yes.

Section 1003.4 states: "Walking surfaces of the means of egress shall have a slip-resistant surface and be securely attached." Therefore, Section 1003.4 does not address the question. However, Section 1011.7.1 allows for stairway walking surfaces to have openings. Since stairways are a higher hazard than a general walking surfaces, it is appropriate to apply Section 1011.7.1 to general walking surfaces.

2. Section 1011.7.1 Stairway Walking Surfaces, Exceptions 1 and 2 states:

"1. Openings in stair walking surfaces shall be a size that does not permit the passage of 1/2-inch-diameter (12.7 mm) sphere. Elongated openings shall be placed so that the long dimension is perpendicular to the direction of travel.

2. In Group F, H and S occupancies, other than areas of parking structures accessible to the public, openings in treads and landings shall not be prohibited provided a sphere with a diameter of 1 1/8 inches (29 mm) cannot pass through the opening."

Eric M. Mays, P.E.  
Building Official