***A Guide to Stairs in Single-family Dwellings or Houses with a Secondary Suite***

This guide is intended to be used as a helpful tool during the construction or renovation of stair systems in houses. For details regarding stairs outside of a single-family dwelling, it is best to contact our office to speak with one of our inspectors.

Single-family dwellings or houses with a secondary suite have slightly relaxed code provisions for stair systems, which is justified by the familiarity occupants acquire living in a home. Here are the important code provisions to remember while constructing a safe, code-compliant stair system:

1. Notably, the National Building Code has clarified the definition of “flight” as “a series of steps between landings” (NBC Division A 1-7). With this revised definition, stairs in a split-entry home, for example, can be treated separately from one another where they are divided by a landing.
2. Stair width is required to be 860 mm (33 7/8”) at a minimum, and the landings for stairs shall be as wide and as deep as the flight of stairs it serves.
3. Provisions for the rise and run of a flight of stairs can be found in this illustration:

A diagram of steps with measurements

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