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## OSHA vs IBC Approved Stairs — What is the difference, and which stairs should you select for your next project?

When building a stair or ladder system in your facility, there will more than likely be a few standards for the structure to meet in order for it to satisfy your building codes. These standards for building stairs and ladder systems are set up by OSHA and IBC.

**OSHA**, known as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, is a United States federal agency that regulates and enforces workplace safety and health. The OSH Act covers most private sector employers and their workers and OSHA standards generally only apply in a workplace. The stairway structure must first only be for the use of workers with no access to the public. Typically, they include areas like factory floors and manufacturing spaces where only designated employees work.

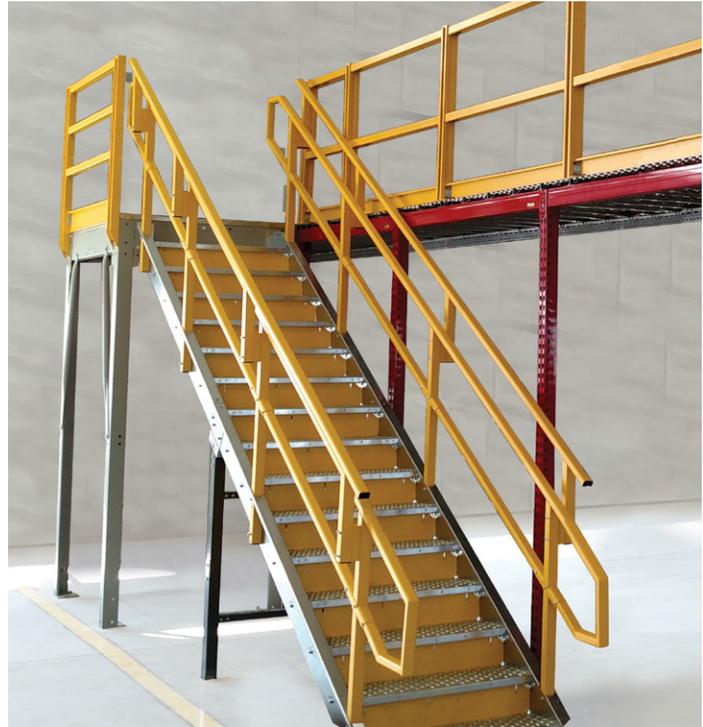
For anyone working in an industrial or warehouse environment, where cost, space, efficient material handling and worker safety are vital, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-based stairs are often preferred over IBC stairs due to their smaller footprint, better fit, and lower cost.



New rules issued by OSHA in January 2017 changed a number of design elements of OSHA compliant stairs and many Stair designs which were compliant prior to 2017 are no longer complaint. Be certain that your vendor has updated their OSHA designs.

Equipto offers two styles of OSHA complaint stairways. The difference in the two designs relates to how the guardrail (higher fall prevention railing) and the handrail are connected — in one version, the external guardrail is positioned outside the stair tread “footprint,” giving full use of the width of the stairway; the second version has all of the railings over the treads — resulting in a stairway that fits better in those cases where a prior set of stairways is being replaced or the landing is of limited width.

**IBC** or the *International Building Code* is a model building code developed by the International Code Council to standardize building codes across the United States. The *International Building Code* is in use or adopted in 50 states, the District of Columbia, New York City, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. As a model code, the IBC is intended to be adopted in accordance with the laws and procedures of a governmental jurisdiction. When adopting a model code like the IBC, some jurisdictions amend the code in the process to reflect local practices and laws.



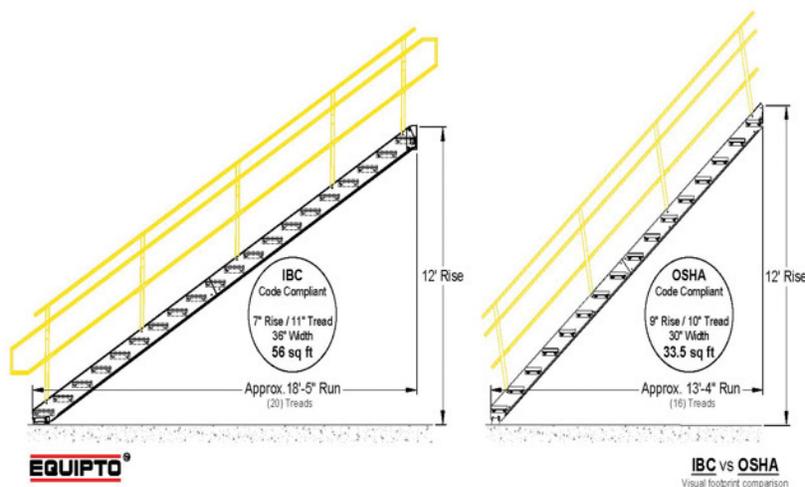
Typically IBC stairs are used for facilities allowing public access in order to protect a wide range of people from the physically-capable to the physically challenged.

While many industrial and MRO distributors do not offer an IBC compliant stairway system, Equipto has been manufacturing and offering an IBC compliant stairway for many years. As mentioned above, it does have a larger footprint and is typically more expensive.

Ultimately you will need to determine what local building codes require. While in factories and warehouses and other business locations, OSHA standards typically apply, certain states and local authorities have mandated IBC standards in those locations as well.

In general terms, OSHA standards are less stringent than IBC standards IBC stairs also require a bigger footprint than OSHA stairs. Not only are the treads generally deeper, but also there are usually more treads required.

See the illustration below for a comparison:



While your vendor should be insuring full compliance with the updated OSHA and IBC rules, summarized below are some of the key measurements.

### **Summary of the Key Measurements in each Code**

	<b>OSHA</b>	<b>IBC</b>
Handrail Height Min/Max	30"/38"	34"/38"
Guardrail Height	42" Min.	42" Min.
Minimum Tread Depth	9.5"	11"
Stair Rise Min/Max	-/9.5"	4"/7"
Riser Covers	Optional	Required
Handrail Extensions	N/A	12" beyond top and bottom riser
Angle of Incline	30 - 50 Deg.	N/A
Minimum Clear Width	22"	36"
Maximum Opening Between Stair Rails	19"	19"
Finger Clearance Between Handrail and Any Other Object	2.25"	1.5"

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