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What is the difference between OSHA and IBC approved stairs, and which stairs should you select for your next project?

First you will need to determine what local building codes require. There are typically higher standards for areas that are open to the public and high traffic areas than areas that are utilized only by employees and low traffic areas. In general terms, OSHA standards are less stringent than IBC standards and are more commonly utilized in government facilities. IBC standards are preferred and more prevalent in private industry.

Breakdown of Major Differences Between OSHA and IBC

	OSHA	IBC
Horizontal Run	With OSHA Stairs the horizontal run and the length of the stairwell, is approximately equal to the height of the deck. For instance if the mezzanine deck height is 10', the stairwell is 10' long.	IBC Stairs have a horizontal run that is approximately 1.5 times the deck height, not including landings or handrail extenders, so a 10' high mezzanine deck would have an approximate 15' long stairwell.
Risers & Tread	OSHA Stairs typically have an 8" open riser and an 9" tread.	IBC Stairs typically have a 7" closed riser and an 11" tread.
Stair Width	OSHA Stairs are minimum 22" wide.	IBC Stairs are minimum 36" wide in most cases
Railings & Guardrail	OSHA requires railings on open sides of stairwells and a handrail on at least on side, preferably the right side descending at 34" high.	IBC Stairs require rails of 42" high and handrails of 34" high on both sides of the stairwell.
Landings	Both OSHA and IBC require landings at the top and bottom of the stairs, although IBC landings are larger, typically 4' square.	IBC also requires an intermediate landing on stairwells for stairwells over 12' high, as well as handrail extensions at the bottom landing.