

Case Study

Trip & Fall

Injury on Stairs in a Historic Hotel

The Problem

A woman who worked in the building fell on a small stair. The complaint asked for \$700,000 for both medical compensation and lost wages. Specific claims included:

1. The stairs did not comply with IBC and City Codes
2. The stair treads and risers exceeded code limitations
3. The handrail height and location was insufficient
4. The stairs were damaged and chipped
5. There was insufficient traction at the top of the stairs
6. There was insufficient lighting at the black stairs

The building was a historic hotel originally constructed at the turn of the 20th century. The staircase was comprised of two marble steps with three risers, located at the main foyer of the hotel lobby. The staircase appeared to have been remodeled in 1992.

The Solution

PFCS was hired to (1.) perform a forensic inspection, documenting the conditions with diagrams, notes and many photographs showing the current layout of the stairs, handrails and lighting, (2.) perform analysis of all available information including building codes & standards, (3.) draw conclusions, and (4.) deliver our findings in a report.

Unfortunately for the client, the allegations were partially correct and the configuration of the stairs could very well have contributed to the fall. From our report:

Since the stairs were remodeled in 1992, they should have been in conformance with the current codes and requirements at the time... At the time of the accident, there were several code violations. While the handrails were up to code, both the stair treads and risers violated code requirements.

Regarding the plaintiff's allegations,

1. The stairs did not comply with IBC and City of Portland Codes: **We Agree**
2. The stair treads and risers exceeded code limitations: **We Agree**
3. The handrail height and location was insufficient: **We Disagree**
4. The stairs were damaged and chipped: **Agree (Somewhat)**
5. There was insufficient traction at the top of the stairs: **Disagree**
5. There was insufficient lighting at the black stairs: **Disagree**

The client was grateful to receive this candid analysis early in the case, and they were able to settle the matter fairly, with minimal further litigation expenses.

