Fence Construction Factsheet

If your fence is less than five feet tall, you do not need a permit. If it is at least five feet obtain a Dep’t of Buildings Easy Permit. To have buried utilities marked by a property, call Digger at 312-744-7000.

Definitions (§13-96-130)

(a) A “fence” is hereby defined as a structure forming a barrier at the grade between lots, between a lot and a street or any alley, or between portions of a lot or lots, such structures being independent of any other.

(b) Fences shall be classified according to the general form of their construction as screen fences or solid fences.

(c) A screen fence is a fence so constructed that at least 50 percent of the superficial area thereof consists of regularly distributed apertures.

(d) A solid fence is a fence so constructed that less than 50 percent of the superficial area thereof consists of regularly distributed apertures.

(e) Any fence not constructed entirely of noncombustible materials shall be classed as a combustible fence.

Maximum height (§13-96-140)

(a) The height of a combustible screen fence shall not exceed eight feet.

(b) The height of a combustible solid fence shall not exceed six feet, except that such fence may have a height not exceeding eight feet under the following conditions:

(1) When the distance from the fence to a public way exceeds the height of the fence.

(2) When such fence is laterally braced on one side with structural braces extending to the top of the fence or is supported by posts of noncombustible material set in masonry or concrete foundations.

(c) The height of a noncombustible screen fence shall not exceed ten feet, except as follows:

(1) A noncombustible screen fence enclosing a place of open air assembly or yard of an institutional, business, industrial or storage occupancy may have a height not exceeding 15 feet.

(d) The height of a noncombustible solid fence shall not exceed eight feet except as follows:

(1) A noncombustible solid fence enclosing a place of open air assembly or a yard of an institutional, business, industrial or storage occupancy may have a height not exceeding 12 feet.

Wind load (§13-96-150)

Fences shall be designed and constructed to resist a horizontal wind pressure of not less than 30 pounds per square foot in addition to all other forces to which they may be subjected.

Barbed wire (§13-96-160)

The use of barbed wire at a height less than eight feet above the ground shall be prohibited; provided, however, that the use of barbed wire above six feet from the ground when wholly on or over private property shall be permitted.

Spikes (§8-4-210)

No owner, lessee, or person in possession of any building in this city shall erect, maintain, or permit to be erected or maintained on or about the stairway in, or the entrance to, such building, or on or about its exterior building line, or upon any portion of the sidewalk adjacent to such building, any railing, fence, guard, or protection of any kind, upon which there shall be affixed or in any manner attached so as to protrude therefrom any spike, nail, or other pointed instrument of any kind or description, unless such protrusion shall be an integral part of the fencing located entirely on private property; and unless any such protrusion, projecting vertically upward, shall be at least six feet in height above the ground; and unless any such protrusion, projecting vertically downward, shall be not more than six inches from the ground.