

# PRESS RELEASE



**National Ornamental & Miscellaneous Metals Association**

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## NOMMA Retains Professional Research Firm To Assist in Guard Railing Climbability Studies

MCDONOUGH, GA — The National Ornamental & Miscellaneous Metals Association (NOMMA) has retained the services of Whorton Marketing & Research of Columbia, MD to conduct a comprehensive study on rail safety in relation to young children. The purpose of the study is to evaluate all known railing safety studies conducted around the world, uncover new sources of information, and make factual determinations based on sound scientific methods.

Should the study reveal proven shortcomings in current model codes and standards in regards to railings, proposals will be explored that address safety issues while remaining sensitive to the needs of fabricators, the design/build community, and owners.

Since the mid 1980s, increasing code requirements and the Americans with Disabilities Act have actually made railings a highly regulated product in the U.S. NOMMA applauds current codes and standards that provide proven safety benefits and increased access for persons with disabilities. In fact, NOMMA formally supports the railing requirements found in the 2001–2006 International Codes.

However, the NOMMA Technical Affairs Division has become increasingly concerned over a troubling trend in the past decade. Since the late 1990s, code change proponents have regularly submitted proposals that severely limit designs of guard railings to the model building codes, which are often based on emotion, unscientific research, and distortions of existing studies. In several cases, proposed changes have gone far beyond what NOMMA sees as reasonable or necessary.

“NOMMA is committed to the safe design, use, and installation of our member’s products,” said NOMMA president Douglas Bracken. “In fact, the railings our members produce protect millions of people each day. However, we will always remain open and willing to continually study ways of making our railings and the other products our members produce even safer. Public safety, especially the safety of children, remains our first and foremost concern.”

Under the arrangement with Whorton Marketing & Research, the company will evaluate existing studies and compiled accident reports to help NOMMA to develop a stronger research base on railing climbability. If significant gaps are found in the current documented research, NOMMA will consider a second phase, which would be a primary research program that might involve a combination of computer modeling and observational tests with human subjects. Already, the NOMMA Technical Division is conducting a search for university medical facilities and injury prevention centers that could provide independent and scien-

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tifically based research to serve these needs. If needed, NOMMA will also consider work on a third phase, which would be the creation of an ASTM or ANSI standard.

The initial research will include a systematic review and analysis of publicly available accident data and the examination of existing studies, including studies on infant and child behavior.

The specific timetable is being finalized, and the initial study is expected to take approximately three months. Throughout this process, the NOMMA Technical Team intends to continue its support and cooperation with the International Code Council's Code Technology Committee (CTC). Currently, NOMMA is a proud and active participant on the CTC's Climbable Guard Study Group, which was formed in October 2005. NOMMA intends to fully share research information and work closely with the Study Group to ensure a transparent process of research, information dissemination, and application to current and potential future codes.

"I am excited about our new relationship," said Kevin Whorton, principal of Whorton Marketing & Research. "I feel that our firm is uniquely suited to fulfill NOMMA's need for an objective research advisor that can organize the body of knowledge accumulated worldwide over many years, and to ensure that a sufficient base of knowledge exists to support industry standards that protect public safety. We are looking forward to working with the NOMMA staff and Technical team on this important project."

NOMMA, headquartered in McDonough, GA, is the trade association of the ornamental and miscellaneous metals industry. Founded in 1958, NOMMA has over 1,000 member firms in the United States and in 13 foreign countries. The association hosts the annual METALfab convention and trade show, and is the proud publisher of *Ornamental & Miscellaneous Metal Fabricator*, a glossy trade magazine with an industrywide circulation of 9,000.

Whorton Marketing & Research, headquartered in Columbia, MD, specializes in conducting research and marketing campaigns for nonprofit organizations. The firm's principals have 20 years of experience conducting industry, technical, and market research for trade and professional associations.

Note To Editors: Please visit our Child Safety Area at <http://www.nomma.org/support/consumer/childsafety/childsafety.cfm>

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