



BUILDING INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

EGRESS WINDOWS

WHAT ARE THE SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR WINDOWS USED AS EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS?

A window used as an emergency escape and rescue opening must satisfy four Minnesota Residential Code criteria:

- Minimum width of opening: 20 in.
- Minimum height of opening: 24 in.
- Minimum net clear opening: 5.7 sq. ft. (5.0 sq. ft. for ground floor).
- Maximum sill height above floor: 44 in.

The window must have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 sq. ft. Net clear opening refers to the actual free and clear space that exists when the window is open. It is not the rough opening size or the glass panel size, but the actual opening a person can crawl through.

BASEMENT WINDOWS USED FOR EMERGENCY ESCAPE OR RESCUE OPENINGS

An egress window is required **whenever a bedroom is created** or **whenever a basement is enlarged** unless the dwelling has a fire sprinkler system. If an egress window is installed in a basement bedroom, an additional egress window is not required in the balance of the basement unless there are additional bedrooms.

Because of their location below grade, basement windows present an added challenge. Below grade windows must have a window well that permits the window to function as an emergency escape or rescue opening. Window wells must:

- Allow the rescue window opening to be fully opened.
- Provide 9 sq. ft. of "floor area," with a minimum dimension of 36" in width and length.
- **If the window well depth exceeds 44 inches**, the well must contain a permanently affixed ladder or steps. The ladder must be at least 12" wide and project no less than 3" from the window well wall. Ladders may not obstruct the operation of the window or project more than 6 inches into the required window well dimensions.

Window wells may be made of rust resistant metal, treated wood, wood naturally resistant to decay, concrete, masonry, or plastic. Some window well designs have steps built or molded into them.

If an egress window is located under a deck or porch, the code requires at least 36 inches between the top of the window well and the bottom of the deck or porch joists.

