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Emergency Escape & Rescue Openings for Homes
Excerpt from Section R310 of the Residential Building Code

The following is an excerpt from Section R301 of the Residential Building Code regarding emergency escape & rescue openings in a dwelling. These requirements apply when building a new home, adding on to a home and when finishing a basement in a home.

R310.1 Emergency Escape and Rescue Required. *Basements with habitable space and every sleeping room shall have at least one openable emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door opening for emergency escape and rescue. Where openings are provided as means of escape and rescue, they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches above the floor. Where a door opening having a threshold below the adjacent ground elevation serves as an emergency escape and rescue opening and is provided with a bulkhead enclosure, the bulkhead enclosure shall comply with Section R310.3. The net clear opening dimensions required by this section shall be obtained by the normal operation of the window or door opening from the inside. Escape and rescue window openings with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall be provided with a window well in accordance with Section R310.2.*

R310.1.1 Minimum Opening Area. *All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet.*

Exception: *Grade floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet.*

R310.1.2 Minimum Opening Height. *The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches.*

R310.1.3 Minimum Opening Width. *The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches.*

R310.1.4 Operational Constraints. *Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys or tools.*

- Note: “net clear opening” means the actual airspace through which a person could exit when the window is open.
- Note: using the minimum width and height of an opening will not equal the minimum required opening area for escape.