

# WHAT IS AN EGRESS WINDOW?

An egress window is a window that is required in specific locations in a dwelling and is intended to provide an emergency means of exiting a dwelling. Windows must meet specific size and requirements to qualify as an egress window.

## WHERE ARE EGRESS WINDOWS REQUIRED?

Egress windows are required in every room **used for sleeping purposes** (bedrooms) on any floor and in basements with habitable space. If you are constructing a new home, the code requires that you put an egress window in each bedroom. **It also requires an egress window in the basement if habitable rooms will be finished in the basement. If you install a basement bedroom or bedrooms, an egress window is required in each bedroom.** If you have an existing home and you add a sleeping room in an unfinished basement, **the code requires that you install an egress window** in the sleeping room or rooms.

## WHAT ARE SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EGRESS WINDOW?

An egress window must satisfy four International Residential Code (IRC) 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.**

The window opening must be operational from the inside without keys or tools. Bars, grilles and grates may be installed over windows but must be operational without tools or keys and still allow the minimum clear opening.

You might assume that a 20-in. by 24-in. window would be acceptable for egress. However, those dimensions would yield a net clear opening of only 3.3 sq. ft. To achieve the required net clear opening of 5.7 sq. ft., a 20-in. wide window would have to be 42 in. high. Likewise, a 24-in. high window would have to be 34 in. wide.

## MUST I USE A SPECIAL TYPE OF WINDOW?

**Casement windows** with hinged sashes that swing free and clear of the opening can be relatively small and still meet egress requirements. This makes them ideal for basement egress and for other areas where space is limited.

# BASEMENT EGRESS WINDOWS

Besides the height, width and overall square-footage requirements that the basement egress window must meet, there are certain requirements for the window well surrounding the window.

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. in width and in length.
- Contain a permanently affixed ladder or steps for climbing out **if the window well depth exceeds 44 inches in depth**. The ladder must be at least 12 in. wide and project no less than 3 in. from the window well. It can't be obstructed by the open window or encroach on the required window well dimensions by more than 6 in.

If an egress window is located under a deck or porch, the code requires at least 48 inches between the top of the window well and the bottom of the deck or porch joists.

## ***BEDROOM WINDOW EGRESS***

### ***HEIGHT AND WIDTH REQUIREMENTS (in inches)***

|               |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>5.7 SF</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Width</b>  | 20.0 | 20.5 | 21.0 | 21.5 | 22.0 | 22.5 | 23.0 | 23.5 | 24.0 | 24.5 | 25.0 | 25.5 | 26.0 | 26.5 | 27.0 | 27.5 | 28.0 | 28.5 | 29.5 | 30.0 |
| <b>Height</b> | 41.0 | 40.0 | 39.0 | 38.0 | 37.0 | 36.5 | 35.5 | 35.0 | 34.0 | 33.5 | 33   | 32.0 | 31.5 | 31.0 | 30.5 | 30.0 | 29.5 | 29.0 | 28.0 | 27.5 |
| <b>5.0 SF</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Width</b>  | 20.0 | 20.5 | 21.0 | 21.5 | 22.0 | 22.5 | 23.0 | 23.5 | 24.0 | 24.5 | 25.0 | 25.5 | 26.0 | 26.5 | 27.0 | 27.5 | 28.0 | 28.5 | 29.5 | 30.0 |
| <b>Height</b> | 36.0 | 35.0 | 34.0 | 33.5 | 33.0 | 32.0 | 31.0 | 30.5 | 30.0 | 29.5 | 29.0 | 28.5 | 27.5 | 27.0 | 26.5 | 26.0 | 25.5 | 25.0 | 24.5 | 24   |

For example, to achieve a **5'7"** Sq. Ft. Opening: If you have a window with an "open" width of 24", then the minimum "open" height would have to be 34"

**OR,**

If you have a window with an "open" height of 34", then the minimum "open" width would have to be 24"

For example, to achieve a **5'0"** Sq. Ft. Opening:

If you have a window with an "open" width of 20", then the minimum "open" height would be 36"

**OR,**

If you have a window with an "open" height of 36", then the minimum "open" width would be 20"