

Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings (International Residential Code)

R310.1. Basements with habitable space and every sleeping room shall have at least one openable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room, but shall not be required in adjoining areas of the basement. Where emergency escape and rescue openings are provided they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) 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 emergency escape and rescue opening from the inside. Emergency escape and rescue openings with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall be provided with a window well in accordance with Section R310.2.

Exceptions:

1. Basements without bedrooms that provide a second stairway that terminates in a room separate from the first stairway.
2. The finished sill height may exceed 44 inches (1118 mm) above the floor if approved by the building official and the following conditions are met:
 - a) The exterior finish grade is more than 36 inches (914 mm) above the interior floor level of the room, OR altering the exterior configuration of the building would adversely affect the historical significance of the building.
 - b) A platform capable of supporting a live load of 300 pounds shall be permanently affixed at the interior of the window. This platform shall be no lower than 20 inches (508 mm) above the floor and no higher than 36 inches (914 mm) above the floor. The distance from the platform to the finished sill height shall not exceed 36 inches (914 mm). The platform shall extend outward from the wall a minimum of 24 inches (610 mm) and shall be at least as wide as the clear openable width of the window.
 - c) The escape or rescue window shall have minimum clear openable area of 9 square feet (0.84 meters squared), with a minimum dimension of 36 inches (914 mm).
 - d) The building shall be equipped with smoke detectors installed in accordance with Section R313.

R320.1.1 All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet (0.530 meters squared).

Exception: Grade floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet (0.465 meters squared).

R310.1.2 the minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches (610 mm).

R310.1.3 The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches (508).

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

R310.2 The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 square feet (0.84 meters squared), with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches (914 mm). The area of the window well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened.

Exception: The ladder or steps required by Section 310.2.1 shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches (152 mm) into the required dimensions of the window well.

R310.2.1 Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches (1118 mm) shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. Ladders or steps required by this section shall not be required to comply with Sections R311.5 and R311.6. Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches (305 mm), shall project at least 3 inches (76 mm) from the wall and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches (457 mm) on center vertically for the full height of the window well.

R310.3 Bulkhead enclosures shall provide direct access to the basement. The bulkhead enclosure with the door panels in the fully open position shall provide the minimum net clear opening required by Section R310.1.1. Bulkhead enclosures shall also comply with Section R311.5.8.2.

R310.4 Bars, grills, covers and screens or similar devices are permitted to be placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, bulkhead enclosures, or window wells that serve such openings, provided the minimum net clear opening size complies with Section R310.1.1 to R310.1.3, and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.