



CITY OF HELENA BUILDING DIVISION



Miscellaneous "BITS" of information that may be of interest to the City of Helena
Contractors and Design Professionals
August 2022

SECTION R310 - EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS (Egress Windows)

In accordance with 2021 edition of the International Residential Code.



ARE PERMITS REQUIRED FOR THE INSTALLATION OR REPLACEMENT OF WINDOWS?

- o YES, a building permit shall be obtained prior to work beginning where there are any modifications to the rough opening size of the window. This includes egress and non-egress windows.
- o NO, a building permit is not required where the existing windows being replaced are: (must meet all)
 - Compliant with emergency escape and rescue opening size and placement;
 - The new replacement windows comply with emergency escape and rescue opening size and placement; and
 - There will be no modifications to the existing rough opening of the window.



WHEN AND WHERE ARE THEY REQUIRED?

- o In habitable attics; (attics with permanent stairs for access)
- o In all basements, with or without sleeping rooms;
- o In every sleeping room

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.



ARE EGRESS WINDOWS REQUIRED TO BE INSTALLED IN REMODEL OR WINDOW REPLACEMENT PROJECTS?

- o YES, where window is in a newly created or existing sleeping room, egress windows shall be provided.
- o YES, where windows are being replaced and the existing opening is large enough to accommodate a complying egress window, it shall be installed, even if it required changing the style of the window, i.e. from a double hung window to a casement style window.



DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS: (Section R310.2.1)

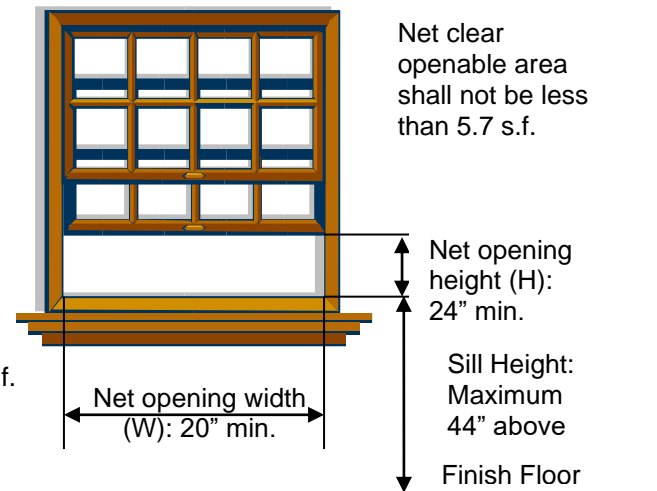
- o Minimum clear width must be at least 20" and the minimum clear height must be at least 24".
- o When fully open, window must be at least 5.7 square feet in area. Where sill height is not more than 44" above or below the ground, the openable area may be 5.0 square feet.

Example:

The minimum width and the minimum height will not meet the minimum area requirements. A window having a minimum width of 20" must be 41" high, or, a window with a minimum height of 24" must be 34.5" wide to provide 5.7 s.f. required area.

Area = Width (W) x Height (H) ** Min. Area = 5.7 s.f.
Where W = 1.67 feet (20") ** H = 5.7 s.f. / 1.67' = 3.41'
The minimum height (H) = 3.41' x 12" = 41"

For a window with a clear opening of 20" wide, the minimum clear opening height would have to be at least 41" to comply with Section R310.



**Grade Floor Openings shall have sill height not greater than 44" above or below the adjacent grade.

**Allowance for existing sill height may be applicable. Contact Building Division for requirements.



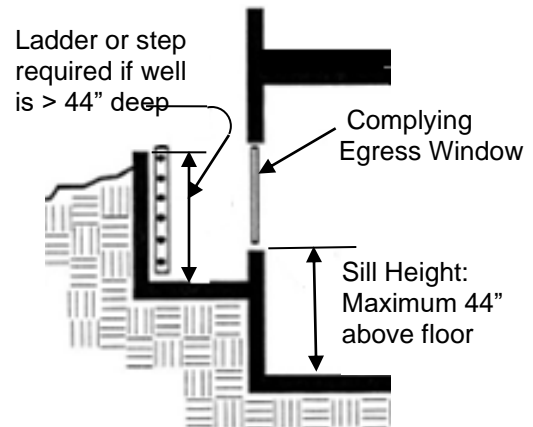
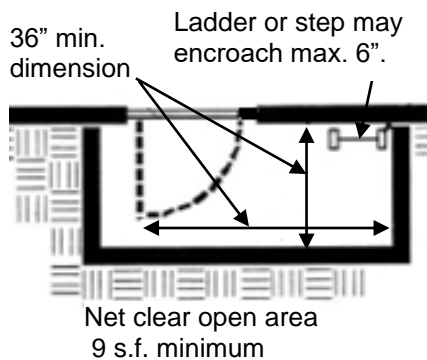
ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Emergency egress windows and doors must lead directly outside the building. Egress may not occur through an attached garage.
- Egress Window shall be operable without the use of a key or any special tools.
- Replacement windows shall be exempt from the maximum sill height requirements of Section R310.2.2 and the requirements of Section R310.4.4, provided that the following conditions are met. 1) The replacement window is the manufacturer's largest standard size window that will fit within the existing frame or existing rough opening. The replacement window is of the same operating style as the existing window or a style that provides for an equal or greater window opening area than the existing window. 2) The replacement window is not part of a change of occupancy.
- Bars, grills, covers and screens are prohibited unless devices are releasable or removable from the inside without the use of key, tool, special knowledge or force greater than that which is required to open the escape and rescue opening. (Section R310.4.4)
- Window fall protection is required for windows greater than 72 inches above adjacent grade or surface below on the exterior of the building. (Section R312.2)



AREA WELLS: (Section R310.4)

Where window opening sill height is located below the adjacent ground elevation, window wells are required. Window wells may be made of corrugated metal window wells, concrete, concrete block or pressure treated lumber.



The window well must:

- Allow for window or door to be fully opened;
- Be a minimum of 9 square feet in horizontal area;
- Have a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36" (encroachment of 6" maximum is permitted for ladder or steps);
- Have a permanent complying ladder or steps where the vertical depth exceeds 44" usable with the window or door in the fully open position;
- Bulkhead enclosures with direct exterior access are permitted if in compliance with minimum net clear opening requirements. (Section R310.3)
- Window well shall be designed for proper drainage to the building's foundation drainage system or by an approved alternate method unless the soil is well-drained or sand-gravel mixture of Group 1 Soils per Table R405.1.



EGRESS WINDOWS UNDER DECKS AND PORCHES (Section R310.2.4)

Emergency escape windows or doors are allowed under decks or porches provided:

- The location allows for window or door to be fully opened;
- The location provides a minimum path of not less than 36" in height to a yard or court.

