

Emergency Egress Windows

The saying “Always have two ways out” is especially true when it comes to home fires. When the basement stairs are blocked or when fire and thick, black smoke are racing down a hallway toward a dead-end bedroom, windows that are large enough for you to escape—and for firefighters to enter—becomes essential life-saving equipment. These all-important secondary means of escape are called egress windows.

Few of us think of windows as life-saving equipment, but they are! When you need to escape a house fire or other disaster, or when rescue personnel need to enter, the right size egress window can make the difference between life and death.

Window Wells

The code requires that every sleeping room or living area must be provided with a secondary means of escape, unless the room has a direct exit to the exterior or the entire unit has a fire sprinkler system.

In case your primary exit is blocked by smoke and fire you will need a second way out. This means at least one operable window or exterior door approved for emergency egress or rescue must be available, including finished basements and attics used as living areas.

Town of Colchester

Department of Planning and Zoning
781 Blakely Rd.
Colchester, VT 05446
Phone: 802-264-5606

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A SECONDARY MEANS OF ESCAPE

Town of
Colchester



Emergency Egress Windows & Window Wells

2017 Code Information
and Work Sheet

Requirements of the Town of Colchester

Secondary Means of Escape

IRC R310

NFPA 101 Section 24.2.2.3

The secondary means of escape shall be an outside window or door operable from the inside without the use of tools, keys, or special effort and shall provide a clear opening of not less than 5.7 sq. ft. for new windows.

Existing windows may be no smaller than 5.0 sq. ft. The width shall not be less than 20 in. (51 cm) and the height shall not be less than 24 in. (61 cm).

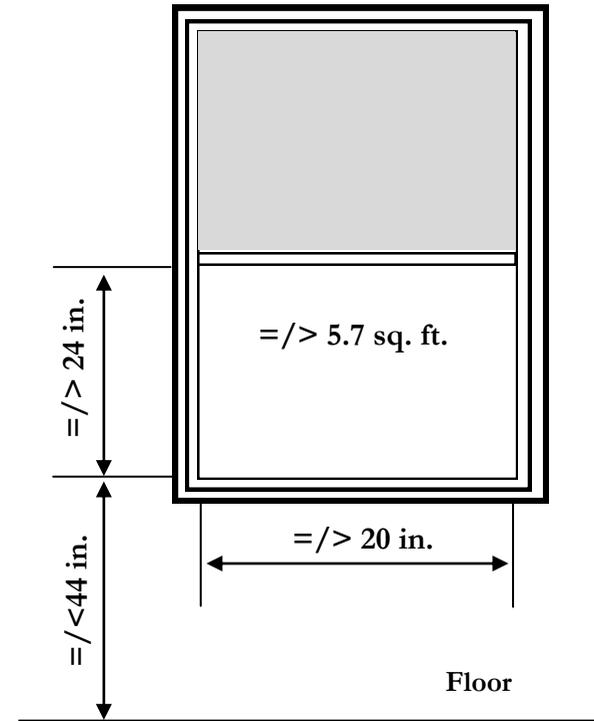
The bottom of the opening shall not be more than 44 in. (112cm) above the floor.

Such means of escape shall be acceptable where one of the following criteria are met:

1. The window shall be within 20 feet (6.1m) of grade.
2. The window shall be directly accessible to fire department rescue apparatus as approved by the authority having jurisdiction.
3. The window or door shall open onto an exterior balcony.

The code requires that every sleeping room, living area be provided with a secondary means of escape. That means at least one operable window or exterior door approved for emergency egress or rescue.

Inside looking out.



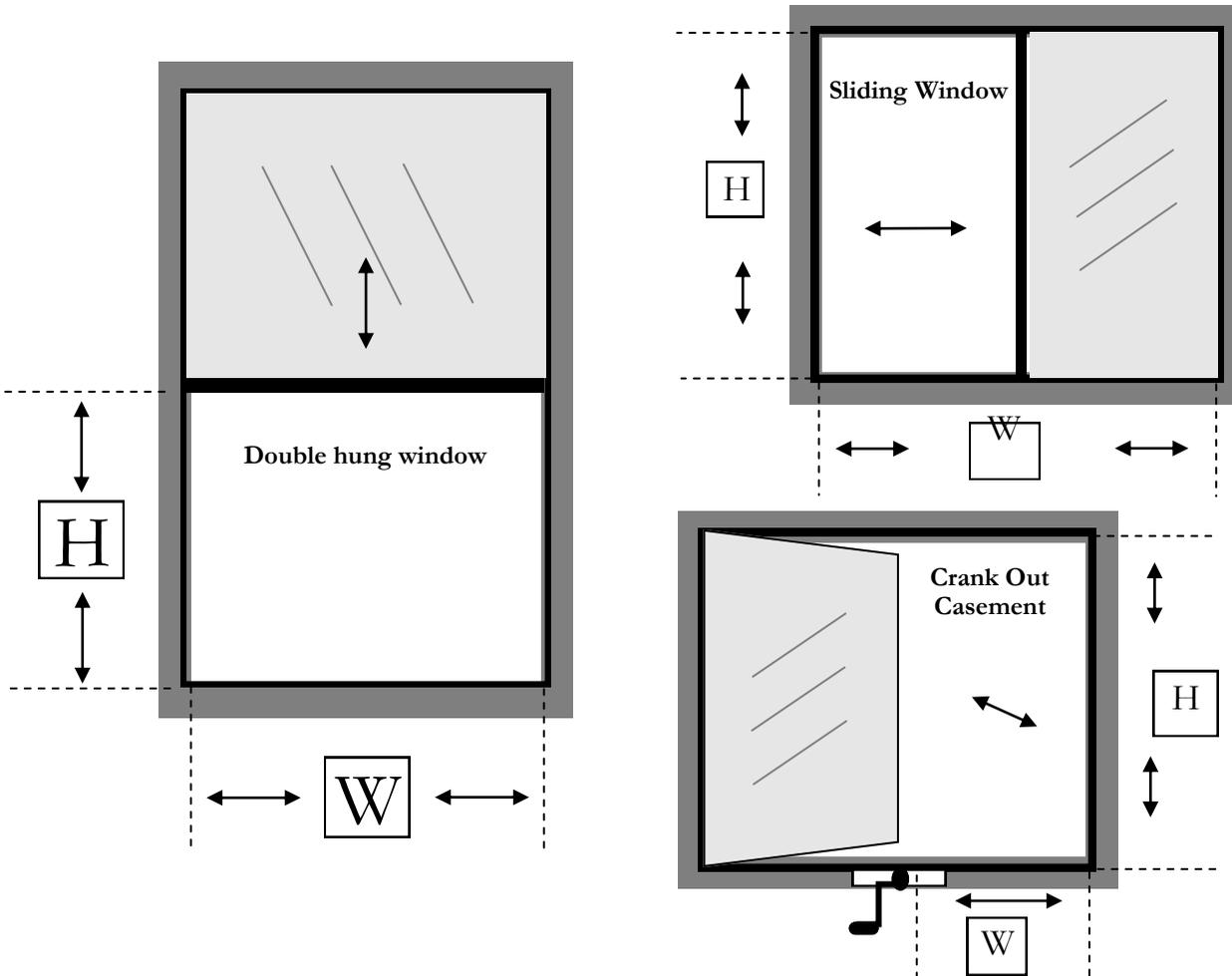
Selecting a new egress window needn't be intimidating. Window manufacturers have many options and list the clear opening of their windows in their catalogs and whether they meet egress requirements.

Note: A window opening that is the bare minimum of 24 in. high and 20 in. wide does not meet egress requirements. Its net clear opening is only 3.33 sq. ft. A window must be taller and/or wider than these minimums to meet the 5.7 sq. opening requirement.

Note: These standards apply to single family and two-family residential units. The State of Vermont should be consulted on code requirements for public buildings.

Definition of Living Area : Any normally occupied space in a residential unit, other than sleeping rooms or rooms that are intended for combination sleeping /living; living rooms, bathrooms, toilet compartments, kitchens, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces, and similar areas.

Window & Window Well Worksheets



1. Measure the openable height (H) ____ Is the clear open height at least 24 inches? Yes () No ()
2. Measure the openable width (W) ____ Is the clear open width at least 20 inches? Yes () No ()
3. Check opening area: (H) ____ x (W) ____ = ____ / 144 = ____ sq. ft.
4. Measure from the lower sill to finished floor _____. Is the distance 44 inches or less? Yes () No ()
5. Measure from the sill to outside ground level _____. Is the distance 20 feet or less? Yes () No ()

Requirements for Window Wells

(NFPA 101-24.2.2.3)

Windows having a sill height below the adjacent ground level shall be provided with a window well meeting the following criteria:

The window well shall have horizontal dimensions that allow the window to be fully opened.

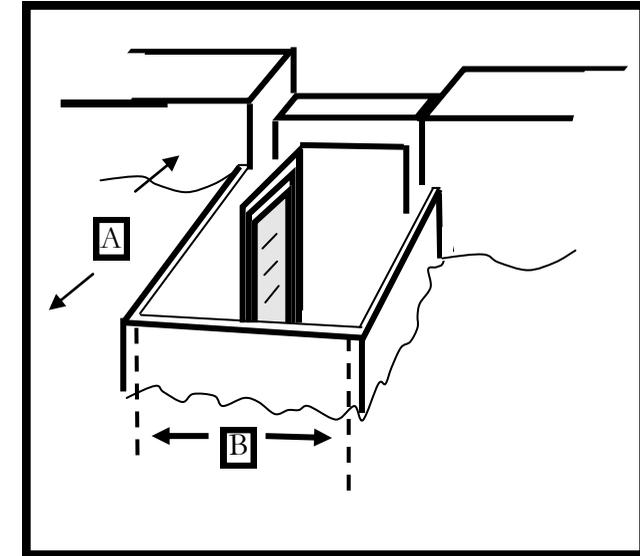
The window well shall have an accessible net clear opening of not less than 9 sq. ft. with a length and width of not less than 36".

A window well with a vertical depth of more than 44" shall be equipped with an approved permanently affixed ladder or with steps meeting the following criteria:

- i. The ladder or steps shall not encroach more than 6" into the required dimensions of the window well.
- ii. The ladder or steps shall not be obstructed by the window.

The clear opening of an existing escape window shall not be less than 5.7 sq. ft.

Bulkhead enclosures that provide direct access to the basement from the exterior may be used as a secondary means of escape, provided the fully open door meets the minimum clear opening. Steps shall meet code and a handrail must be installed if the height of the stairs is more than 8 ft.)



Window Well Work Sheet

1. Measure the clear horizontal distance.
(A) ____ Is it at least 36"? Y__ N__
2. Measure the clear horizontal distance
(B) ____ Is it at least 36"? Y__ N__
3. Are there stairs in the window well if the vertical depth from the ground level is more than 44"? Y__ N__
4. Check the window well opening area.
(A) ____ x (B) ____ = Area ____
Is the Area at least 1272 sq. inches?
Y__ N__