

### ESCAPE & RESCUE WINDOWS IN RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCIES

The following requirements apply to escape and rescue windows in basements and sleeping rooms of dwelling units that allow occupants to escape and rescue personnel to enter.

The International Residential Code states that, “Basements and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Such opening shall open directly into a public street, alley, yard or court.” This “escape and rescue opening” can be a window or door, but it must meet certain criteria:

Escape or rescue windows shall have a minimum net clear openable area of 5.7 square feet (0.53m<sup>2</sup>). An exception allows grade floor openings to be 5.0 square feet.

The minimum net clear opening height dimension shall be 24 inches (610 mm).

The minimum net clear opening width dimension shall be 20 inches (508 mm).

When windows are provided as a means of escape or rescue, they shall have a finished sill height not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) above the floor. See graphic.

When approved by the Building Official, a step may be installed to meet the sill height requirement. The step must be permanently affixed under the escape window and shall have a maximum 7-3/4 inch rise and a minimum 10 inch run. The width of the step should be equal to the width of the openable area of the window.

Escape and rescue windows with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall have a window well. Window wells at escape and rescue windows shall comply with the following:

The clear area dimensions of the window well shall allow the window to be fully opened and provide a minimum accessible net clear horizontal area of 9 square feet (0.84m<sup>2</sup>), with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches (914 mm) when the window is in the open position.

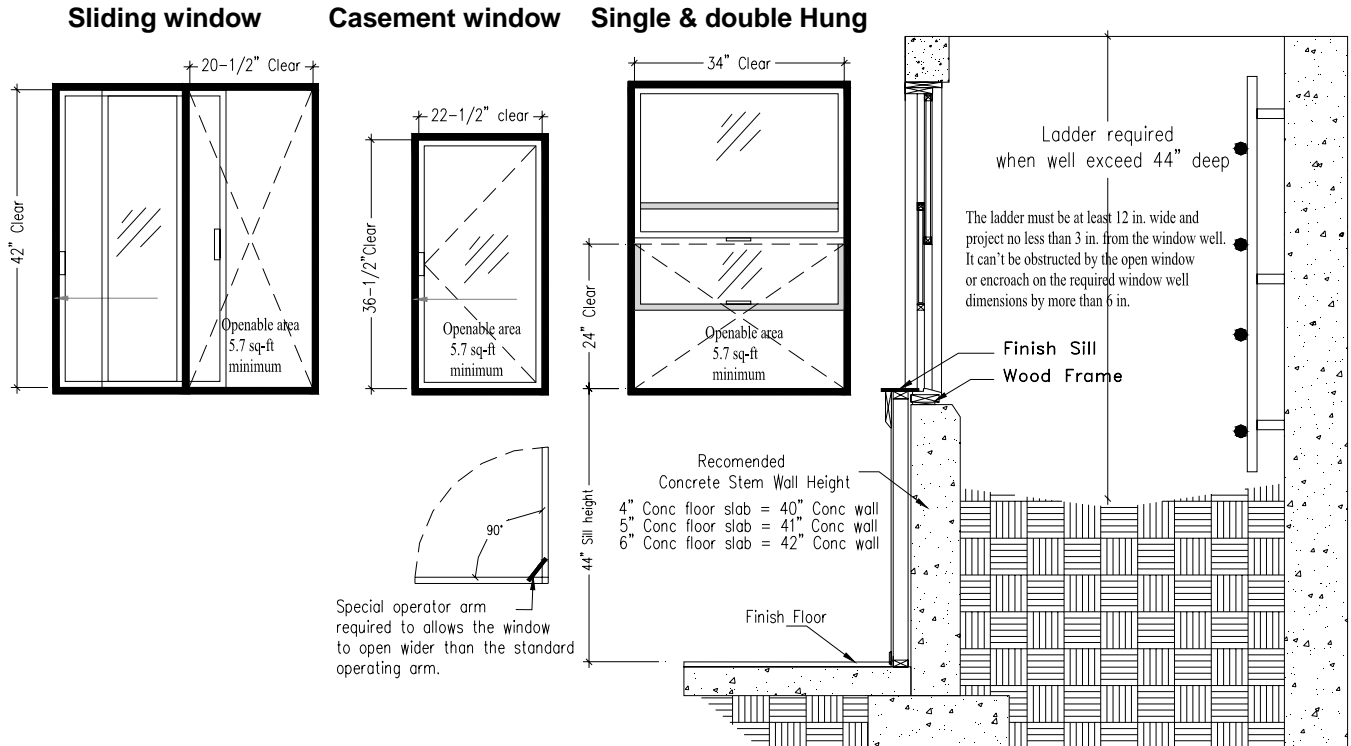
Window wells with a vertical depth of more than 44 inches (1118mm) shall be equipped with an approved permanently affixed ladder or stairs that are accessible with the window in the fully open position. The ladder or stairs shall not encroach into the required dimensions of the window well by more than 6 inches (1.52 mm).

Bars, grilles, grates or similar devices may be installed on emergency escape and rescue windows, doors or window wells serving these openings, provided:

They are operational or removable from the inside without tools or keys and with no greater force than required for the operation of the window or door and still maintain the minimum clear opening requirements.

Emergency escape windows are now allowed to be installed under a deck or porch provided the window can be fully opened and there is a 36 inch high path under the structure to a yard or court.

*When it comes to egress, not all windows are created equal. The figure below shows how any style window can meet egress requirements if the right rough opening is met.*



## Egress Windows & Wells

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
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