

## Resource Guide

# Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

Any project that adds a new basement, habitable attic, or sleeping room is required to include an Emergency Escape and Rescue Opening per the [2021 International Residential Code](#). Because so many fire deaths occur as a result of occupants being asleep in a residential building during a fire, the code requires that these specific areas have windows or doors that may be used for emergency escape or rescue.

### At a glance:

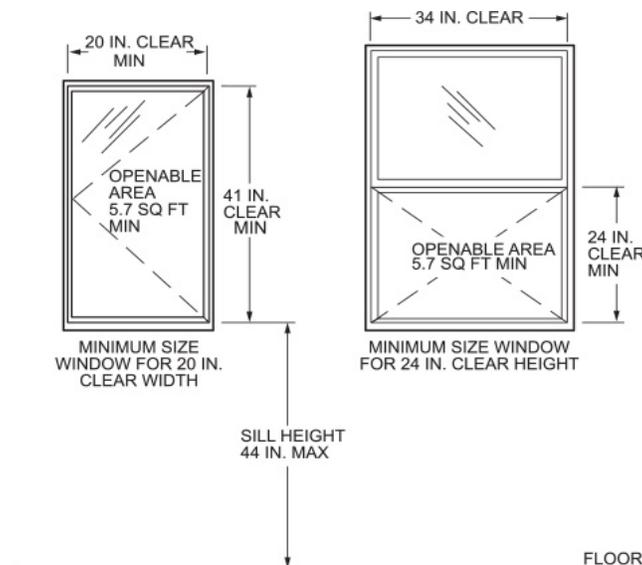
- **Where required:** New basements, habitable attics, and sleeping rooms
- **Minimum size:** 5.7 square feet
- **Minimum dimensions:** 24 inch height / 20 inch width
- **Maximum height from floor:** 44 inches

### Additional detail:

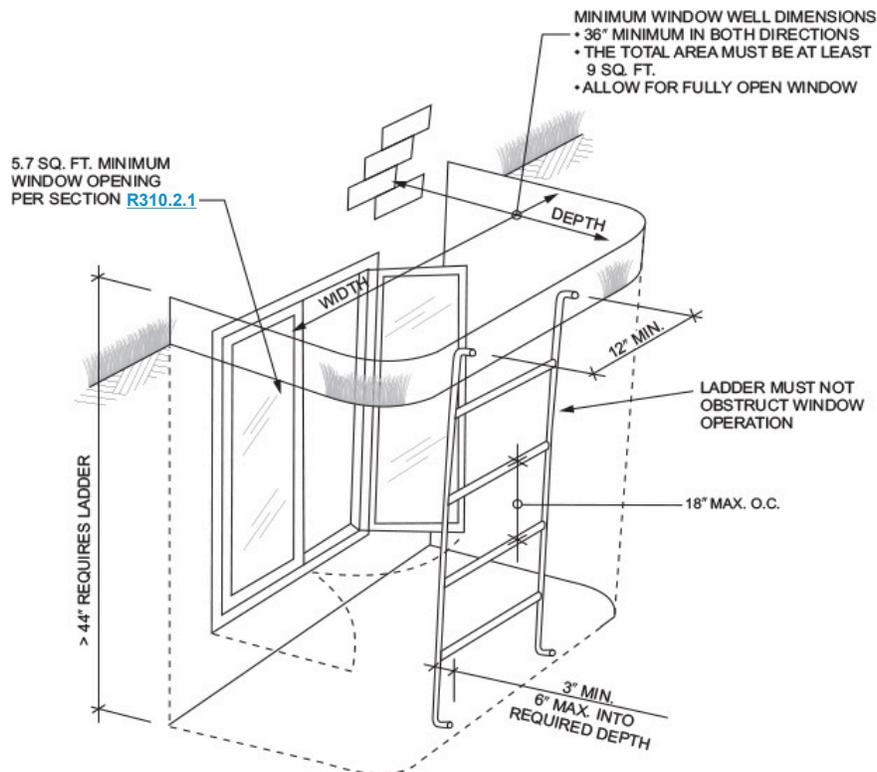
- **[R310.1](#) Emergency escape and rescue opening required.** Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have not less than one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be required in each sleeping room. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court having a minimum width of 36 inches that opens to a public way.
- **[R310.2.1](#) Minimum size.** Emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a net clear opening of not less than 5.7 square feet

### **Exception:**

- The minimum net clear opening for grade-floor emergency escape and rescue openings shall be 5 square feet



- **R310.2.2 Minimum dimensions.** The minimum net clear opening height dimension shall be 24 inches. The minimum net clear opening width dimension shall be 20 inches. The net clear opening dimensions shall be the result of normal operation of the opening.
  - **R310.2.3 Maximum height from floor.** Emergency escape and rescue openings shall have the bottom of the clear opening not greater than 44 inches above the floor.
  - **R310.2.4 Emergency escape and rescue openings under decks, porches and cantilevers.** Emergency escape and rescue openings installed under decks, porches and cantilevers shall be fully openable and provide a path not less than 36 inches in height and 36 inches in width to a yard or court.
  - **R310.3 Emergency escape and rescue doors.** Where a door is provided as the required emergency escape and rescue opening, it shall be a side-hinged door or a sliding door.
  - **R310.4 Area wells.** An emergency escape and rescue opening where the bottom of the clear opening is below the adjacent grade shall be provided with an area well in accordance with Sections **R310.4.1** through **R310.4.4**.
- **Note:** The extent of an area well shall be located within the property lines. If your project includes a new area well, include a site plan showing all proposed area wells with dimensions to all adjacent property lines.



- **R310.6 Dwelling additions.** Where dwelling additions contain sleeping rooms, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be provided in each new sleeping room. Where dwelling additions have basements, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be provided in the new basement.

