

**Emergency Escape & Rescue Opening Requirements for  
One & Two-Family Dwellings  
Based on the 2012 IRC**

**Emergency Escape & Rescue Openings – Sec R310.1**

Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable 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. They shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches measured from the finished floor to the bottom of the clear opening.

- The net clear opening dimension shall be a minimum of 5.7 sq ft – (820.8 square inches)
- Net clear opening height shall be 24 inches minimum x 34.2 inches wide to equal 5.7 sq ft
- Net clear opening width shall be 20 inches minimum x 41.04 inches high to equal 5.7 sq ft

The net clear opening dimensions shall be obtained by the normal operation of the emergency escape and rescue opening from the inside. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys, tools, or special knowledge.

**Window Wells – Sec R310.2**

The area of a window well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened. The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 sq ft., with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches. Exception: The ladder/ steps required by Sec R310.2.1 shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required dimensions of the window well.

**Ladder & Steps – R310.2.1**

Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches below adjacent ground level shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches and shall project at least 3 inches from the wall, shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.

**Drainage- R310.2.2**

Window wells shall be designed for proper drainage by connecting to the building's foundation drainage system or by an approved alternative method.

**Bars, Grills, Covers & Screens – R310.4**

When placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, or window wells that serve such openings, such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool or special knowledge or force greater than that which is required for the normal operation of the emergency escape and rescue opening.

**Emergency Escape Windows Under Decks and Porches- R310.5 (as amended)**

Emergency escape windows are allowed to be installed under decks and porches provided the location of the deck allows the emergency escape window to be fully opened and provides a path not less than 36 inches in height and a travel distance not to exceed 25 feet, to a yard or court.