



## BUILDING DEPARTMENT

# EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS

(Reprinted from the 2012 IRC with the 2016 Connecticut Amendment inserted)

**R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue openings required.** Habitable spaces located within basements, and habitable spaces within attics, and every sleeping room within the dwelling shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements and attics 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 habitable areas of the basement or attic. Where emergency escape and rescue openings are provided, they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches measured from the finished floor to the bottom of the clear opening. Where a door opening having a threshold below the adjacent ground elevation serves as an emergency escape and rescue opening and is provided with a bulkhead enclosure, the bulkhead enclosure shall comply with Section R310.3. The net clear opening dimensions required by this section shall be obtained by the normal operation of the emergency escape and rescue opening from the inside. Emergency escape and rescue openings with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall be provided with a window well in accordance with Section R310.2. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that opens to a public way.

### **Exceptions:**

1. Habitable basements without sleeping rooms are not required to have emergency escape and rescue openings when they are provided with two remote, code-compliant stairways.
2. In existing buildings, basements and attics being converted to habitable space without sleeping rooms are not required to have emergency escape and rescue openings.
3. The 44 inch maximum sill height may be measured vertically above a fixed, permanent platform, step or steps whose minimum width shall equal or exceed the operable width of the opening and shall be centered on such opening and which shall comply with Sections R311.7.5.1 and R311.7.5.2. Glazing in windows complying with this exception shall not be subject to the provisions of Section R308.4.6 or R308.4.7.

**R310.1.1 Minimum opening area.** All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet.



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**Exception:** *Grade* floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet.

**R310.1.2 Minimum opening height.** The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches.

**R310.1.3 Minimum opening width.** The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches.

**R310.1.4 Operational constraints.** Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of a key or tool and the net clear opening dimensions shall be obtained by the normal operation of the opening from the inside.

**Exception:** Existing buildings undergoing alterations or installation of replacement windows shall be permitted to utilize a removable sash to achieve the required minimum net clear openings. Such removable sash shall be capable of being removed without the use of a key or tool.

**R310.2 Window wells.** The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 square feet, with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches. The area of the window well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened.

**Exception:** The ladder or steps required by [Section R310.2.1](#) shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required dimensions of the window well.

**R310.2.1 Ladder and steps.** Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. Ladders or steps required by this section shall not be required to comply with [Sections R311.7](#) and [R311.8](#). Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches, shall project at least 3 inches from the wall and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.

**R310.2.2 Drainage.** Window wells shall be designed for proper drainage by connecting the building's foundation drainage system required by Section R405.1 or by an approved alternative method.



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**Exception:** A drainage system for window wells is not required when the foundation is on well-drained soils according to the United Soil Classification System, Group 1 Soils, as detailed in Table R405.1.

**R310.3 Bulkhead enclosures.** Bulkhead enclosures shall provide direct access to the basement. The bulkhead enclosure with the door panels in the fully open position shall provide the minimum net clear opening required by Section R310.1.1. Bulkhead enclosures shall also comply with Section R311.7.10.2.

**R310.4 Bars, grilles, covers and screens.** Bars, grilles, covers, screens or similar devices are permitted to be placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, bulkhead enclosures, or window wells that serve such openings, provided the minimum net clear opening size complies with [Sections R310.1.1](#) to [R310.1.3](#), and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool, special knowledge or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.

**R310.5 Emergency escape windows under decks and porches.** 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 to a *yard* or court.

If you have any questions please contact the building department,

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