



Nevada County Building Department

950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959
(530) 265-1222

www.mynevadacounty.com

City of Grass Valley Building Department

125 East Main Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(530) 274-4340

www.cityofgrassvalley.com

City of South Lake Tahoe Building Department

1052 Tata Ln.
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
(530) 542-6010

www.cityofslt.us

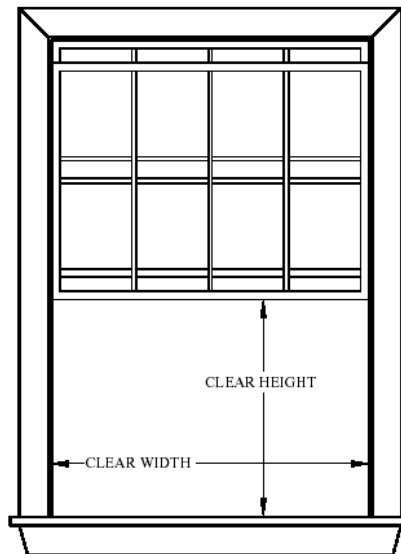
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Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings 2019 California Residential Code

The 1989-1993 annual average for fire deaths due to fires in homes was close to 4000 people; in addition the annual average for injuries due to fires in homes during this same time period, was 21,000. It is because of these figures for deaths and injuries that the building codes require a means for emergency escape or rescue from specific parts of the house. Very few people have the necessary training and equipment to fight a fire in a house; when there is a fire emergency, evacuation of the occupants is the primary strategy to prevent injury or death.

Because a person who is asleep is usually unaware of when a fire begins, an emergency means of escape from a bedroom is required. A fire which begins outside the bedroom often blocks the normal egress path, and leaves the occupants with no alternative but a window or door which opens directly to the outside of the house. Although a person who is occupying a habitable space in a basement may not be asleep, an emergency escape route from the basement is required because a fire in the upper level can render that space unusable as a path of escape from the house.

The importance of early fire warning (smoke detectors) and an emergency escape path provides the best defense against injury or death due to a fire emergency in a house. For people who because of age or physical condition, are unable to exit during a fire emergency, the emergency escape and rescue opening(s) will provide access for trained fire fighters to enter the house and get people out.



Requirements for an Emergency Escape Window

An emergency escape window (or door which opens directly to the outside of the house) is required in every bedroom, or habitable basement. In the event of a fire, this window (or door) will allow people to escape, and/or allow firefighters to get into the house to rescue people.

1. The minimum clear opening height shall be 24".
2. The minimum clear opening width shall be 20".
3. **The minimum clear opening area shall be 5.7 sq. ft.** Multiply the clear width by the clear height to calculate the clear opening area. Note: An opening of 24" x 20" will have an area of 3.33 ft², which is not large enough.
4. **A grade level window may have a clear opening area of 5.0 sq. ft.** A grade level window is one which a person can enter or exit from the ground outside, without a ladder.
5. The clear opening is measured with the lower sash in the raised position.

6. The window clear opening may be a maximum of 44" above the floor.
7. Other types of windows such as sliding or casement may also be used. With the operable part(s) of the window in the fully open position, the clear width, height and area can be determined.

In dwellings protected by automatic fire sprinkler systems, sleeping rooms in basements need not have an emergency escape and rescue opening provided the basement has one of the following:

- *One means of egress complying with Section R311 and one emergency escape and rescue opening.*
- *Two means of egress complying with Section R311.*

Minimum Width/Height Requirements for Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

(5.7sq. ft. opening)

Width	20	20.5	21	21.5	22	22.5	23	23.5	24	24.5	25	25.5	26	26.5	27
Height	41	40	39.1	38.2	37.3	36.5	35.7	34.9	34.2	33.5	32.8	32.2	31.6	31	30.4

Width	27.5	28	28.5	29	29.5	30	30.5	31	31.5	32	32.5	33	33.5	34	34.2
Height	29.8	29.3	28.8	28.3	27.8	27.4	26.9	26.5	26.1	25.7	25.3	24.9	24.5	24.1	24

(5.0 sq. ft. opening)

Width	20	20.5	21	21.5	22	22.5	23	23.5	24	24.5	25	25.5	26	26.5	27
Height	36	35	34.5	33.5	33	32	31.5	31	30	29.5	29	28.5	28	27.5	27

Width	27.5	28	28.5	29	29.5	30
Height	26.5	26	25.5	25	24.5	24

Window Replacement Permits:

If the existing rough opening is not altered or enlarged, then the new window is not required to comply with current egress requirements provided the new assembly does not reduce the open-able dimensions to less than that of the existing assembly or make the window more dangerous to the occupants. *It is highly recommended that existing non-compliant bedroom egress windows be upgraded to meet current code requirements.*