

BEDROOM WINDOWS

In Part 9 Housing and Small Buildings, bedroom windows are not considered to be ordinary escape routes, many occupants have been saved by using them in an emergency. By the time an occupant is able to respond to a smoke alarm the suite may be filled with smoke and their escape route from the bedroom blocked. In the National Building Code - 2019 Alberta Edition (NBC(AE)) Article 9.9.10.1. establishes the general requirement that bedrooms must have at least one window large enough that it can be used as an egress in an emergency.



Egress from bedrooms

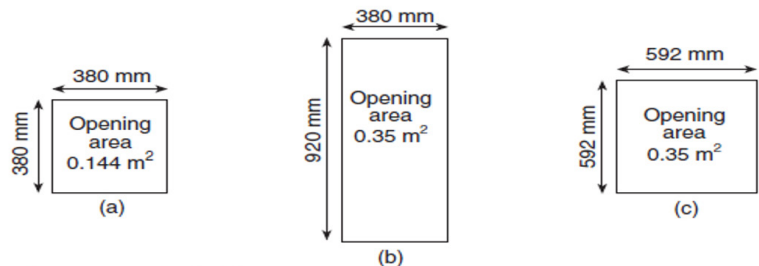
Unless a bedroom has an exterior door or the building has a fire sprinkler system, each bedroom must have at least one window that complies with the following:

- can be opened from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge,
- must provide an unobstructed opening with a minimum area of 0.35 m² (3.77 ft² or 543 in²),
- no dimension less than 380 mm (15 inches).

The window's minimum unobstructed opening must be achieved without having to remove window sashes or hardware, or other obstructions such as security bars, which are not openable. Also the window can't require support when in the open position.

Examples of conforming and non-conforming bedroom windows

The opening in figure (a) is only 0.144 m² (1.6 ft²) and does not conform. It is not large enough to allow the average occupant to pass through the window as an alternate means of escape during an emergency. Figures (b) and (c) do conform to height, width and area requirements.



(a) conforms to opening height and width requirements; does not conform to opening area requirements

(b) and (c) conform to height, width and opening area requirements

SAFETY TIPS

BEDROOM WINDOWS

Window height

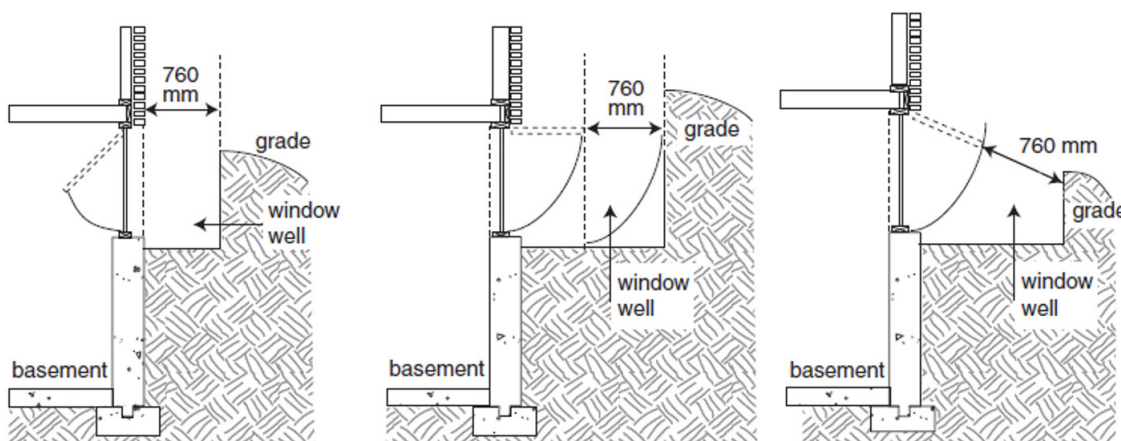
The NBC(AE) does not set a maximum sill height for escape windows but recommends that the sills of windows intended for use as emergency exits be not higher than 1.5 m above the floor. However, it is sometimes difficult to avoid having a higher sill: on windows in basement bedrooms for example. In these cases, it is recommended that access to the window be improved by some means such as built-in furniture installed below the window.

Egress window opening into a window well

Basement bedroom windows present an added challenge. Besides the height, width and overall area requirements that a bedroom egress window must meet, there are certain requirements for the window well on the building exterior. If a window well is required, there must be a minimum clearance of 760 mm in front of designated escape windows to allow persons to escape a basement bedroom in an emergency.

Once this clearance is provided, no additional clearance is needed for windows with sliders, casements, or inward-opening awnings. However, for windows with outward-opening awnings, additional clearance is needed to provide the required 760 mm beyond the outer edge of the sash.

(see the figures below for further clarification)



Before homeowners decide to proceed with renovating their homes to incorporate new or upgraded bedroom windows, they should approach their local municipal administration office. They should discuss their plan with a Development Officer and Building Safety Codes Officer and obtain the necessary information regarding permit requirements.

SAFETY TIPS

BEDROOM WINDOWS

Contact

Community and Technical Support branch of Municipal Affairs:

Hours: 8:15 am to 4:30 pm (open Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays)

Toll free: 1-866-421-6929

Email: safety.services@gov.ab.ca

Web: alberta.ca/safety-codes.aspx

Safety Codes Council:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: sccinfo@safetycodes.ab.ca

Web: safetycodes.ab.ca

Alberta Safety Codes Authority:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca

