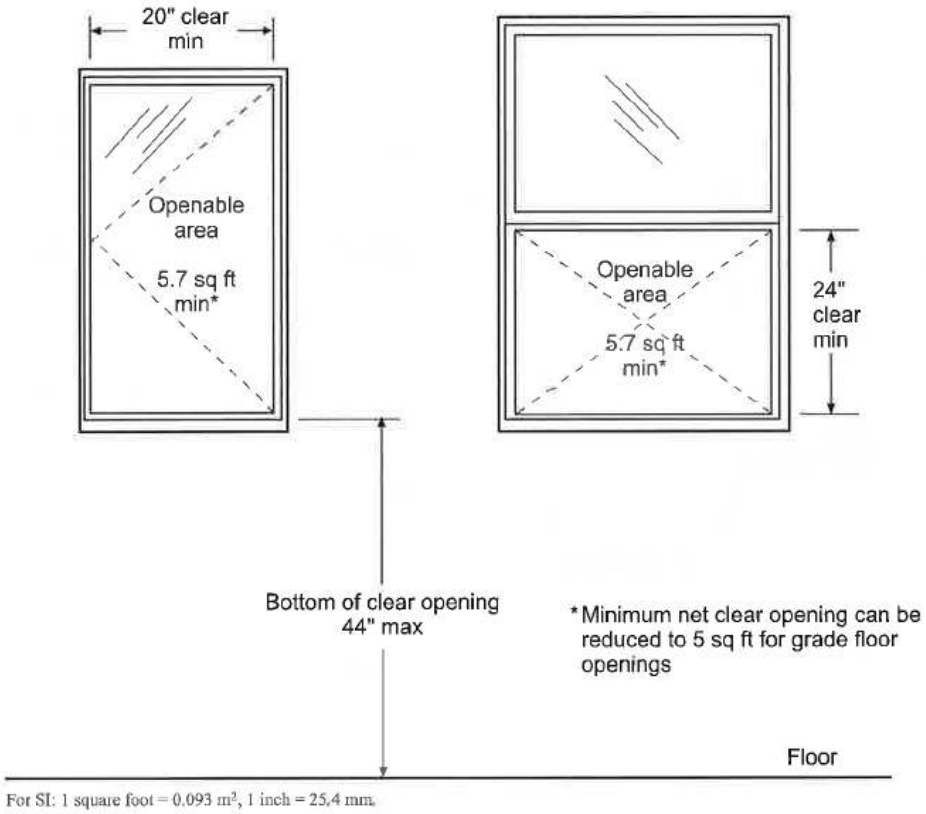
Code Text: *Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening.* See exception for small mechanical equipment areas. *Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room. Where emergency escape and rescue openings are provided they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) measured from the finished floor to the bottom of the clear opening. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that opens to a public way.*

Discussion and Commentary: Because so many deaths and injuries from fire occur as the result of occupants of residential buildings being asleep at the time of a fire, the code requires that basements and all sleeping rooms have doors or windows that may be used for emergency escape or rescue. The concern is based on the fact that often a fire will have spread before the occupants are aware of the danger; thus, the normal means of escape will most likely be blocked.



For SI: 1 square foot = 0.093 m², 1 inch = 25.4 mm.

The minimum dimensions for an escape and rescue opening are based on both escape and rescue criteria. Where the opening occurs very near ground level, the clear opening size can be reduced because access from the exterior can be more easily accomplished without the use of a ladder.