



Basement Egress Window/Emergency Escape Opening Policy

Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings, commonly known as Egress Windows, are required in basement levels under several circumstances. Please note that doors which open directly to the exterior of the building and exterior windows that meet the size requirements of the Emergency Escape/Egress Window handout will qualify as emergency escape and rescue openings. The following explains when emergency escape and rescue openings are required in basements.

1. **New Homes:** All new homes require an emergency escape opening in the basement.
2. **Basement Finishes-Bedrooms:** Existing basements being finished with a bedroom must have an egress window installed in the bedroom.

Note: Finishing an existing basement without a bedroom does not require an egress window.

3. **Basement Wall Replacements:** Basements undergoing a 100% wall replacement require an emergency escape opening.

Exceptions: The following basements do not require emergency escape openings:

- a. Basements less than 200 square feet used only as mechanical rooms.
- b. Basements unable to be finished. Some basements have elements that leave them unable to be finished, for example basements with ceiling heights less than 6'-8".

Note: If you are conducting a 100% basement wall replacement and believe it does not require an emergency escape opening, please contact the Permit & Development Center for a determination.

Technical requirements for emergency escape openings can be found in the Emergency Escape/Egress Window handout at:

https://www.dsm.city/document_center/Community%20Development/Permit%20Development%20Center/Residential/Residential-Egress-Window-Requirements.pdf