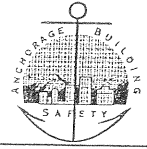




MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
BUILDING SAFETY DIVISION



Policy 019

Emergency Escape Bedroom Windows in Existing Structures and Window Wells

Building Safety has established a policy that any sleeping room that does not have an emergency egress door or window, constitutes a life and safety hazard that is considered a dangerous condition. Also, it is the interpretation that grandfather rights do not apply to a hazardous or dangerous condition.

Anchorage Administrative Code, covering Unsafe Buildings states that all buildings or structures regulated by this code and the technical codes, which are structurally inadequate or have inadequate egress, or which constitutes a fire hazard, or are otherwise dangerous to human life are, for the purpose of this section, unsafe.

The International Building Code, Section 1009, "Emergency Escape and Rescue" and the International Residential Code, Section R310, "Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings," states that basements in dwelling units and every sleeping room below the fourth story shall have at least one openable emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door opening for emergency escape and rescue. Such openings shall open directly into a public street, public alley, yard or court.

The escape or rescue windows shall have a minimum net clear openable area of 5.7 sq. ft. **Grade floor windows may have a minimum net clear opening of 5.0 square feet.** The minimum net clear openable height dimension shall be 24 inches. The minimum net clear openable width dimension shall be 20 inches. **The maximum sill height for basement egress windows shall be 48 inches. The maximum sill height for grade and upper level egress windows shall be 44 inches.** The construction of a permanent step in front of an existing window will be allowed in order to meet the maximum sill height requirement. The maximum height of the step and the minimum run is governed by the currently adopted residential code (7-3/4" maximum rise and 10" minimum run in the 2000 IRC). The minimum width of the step must be the width of the window or 36", whichever is less.

The Anchorage Administrative Code, section 703.2 states that any conditions or defects described shall be deemed to be a dangerous building, provided that such conditions or defects exist to the extent that life, health, property, or safety of the public or its occupants are endangered: whenever any door, aisle, passageway, stairway, or other means of exit is not sufficient width or size or is not so arranged as to provide safe and adequate means of exit in case of fire or panic.

Based upon the above code sections and past policies, Building Safety will require every sleeping room to have an emergency egress. If existing structures do not have an emergency egress, there will be a requirement to construct an egress capable of a clear openable area as stated above for emergency escape or rescue.

Ron Thompson, Building Official
Effective date: January 15, 2004
(Ref. 97-02, 00-03)

IRC Section R310 Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

- ✎ Section R310.2 added to provide details of window wells, which will be required when an emergency escape or rescue opening has a finished sill height below grade.
- ✎ Section R310.2.1 Window wells with a vertical depth of more than 44 inches shall be equipped with an approved ladder or stair.

