

Knox County Code Administration & Inspection

EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS



REV. 022019

Section R310 of the 2018 International Residential Code® for one and two family dwellings with explanation and Knox County amendments.

310.1 Emergency escape and rescue openings. Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency and rescue opening. Such opening shall open directly into a public street, public alley, yard or court. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room, but shall not be required in adjoining areas of the basement. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that opens to a public way.

Exceptions:

1. Storm shelters and basements used only to house mechanical equipment not exceeding a total floor area of 200 square feet.
2. Where the dwelling or townhouse is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, sleeping rooms in basements shall not be required to have an emergency escape and rescue openings provided that the basement has one of the following:
 - a. One means of egress and one emergency escape and rescue opening.
 - b. Two means of egress.

310.1.1 Operational Constraints. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge.

310.2.1 Minimum opening area. All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet.

EXCEPTION: Grade floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet. (Note: A grade floor opening is defined as, "A window or other opening located such that the sill height of the opening is not more than 44 inches above or below the finished ground level adjacent to the opening.)

Minimum opening height. The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches.

Minimum opening width. The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches.

310.2.3 Window wells. The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 square feet with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches.

310.2.3.1 Ladder and steps. Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches (below grade) shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches, shall project at least 3 inches from the wall and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.

310.2.4 Emergency escape windows under decks and porches.

Emergency escape windows are allowed to be installed under decks and porches provided the location of the deck allows the emergency escape window to be fully opened and provides a path not less than 36 inches in height to a yard or court.

310.4 Bars, grilles, covers, and screens. Bars, grilles covers, screens or similar devices are permitted to be placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, provided the minimum net clear opening size complies with Sections 310.2.1 to 310.2.3, and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool, special knowledge or force greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.

Single or double hung windows:

The clear opening is calculated with the lower sash fully opened and then multiplying the clear width times the clear height of the opening. (See section 310 above).

