Basements and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape & rescue opening. All of the following shall apply to all emergency escape and rescue openings:

- **Sill height:** the sill height shall not be more than 44 inches above the floor.
- **Minimum opening area.** The minimum net clear opening shall be 5.7 square feet.
  
  Exception: If sill height is not more than 44 inches above or below the adjacent ground level, a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet is permitted.
- **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. *
- **Operation.** The net clear opening dimensions shall be obtained by normal operation from the inside. Openings shall also be operational from inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge.
- **Direct to outside:** Must open directly to a yard or court.
  
  Exception: If under a deck, provide clearance not less than 36 inches in height to yard or court.
- **Window Well:** A finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation requires a window well.

*Note that using both minimum width and minimum height dimensions will not provide the minimum required area. See the chart below for combinations of dimensions to achieve 5.7 square feet.

Minimum Net Clear Width/Height Requirements for Emergency Escape & Rescue Openings (Inches)

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Emergency Escape & Rescue Openings
International Residential Code (IRC) R310

Window wells required for emergency escape and rescue shall have horizontal dimensions that allow the window to be fully opened. The horizontal dimensions of the window well shall provide a minimum net clear area of 9 square feet with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches.

Window wells with a vertical depth below the adjoining ground exceeding 44 inches shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps. The ladder or steps shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required dimensions of the window well. Ladder rungs shall have a minimum net width of 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.