

## **I am developing my basement and I am wondering what the requirements are for bedroom windows?**

People asleep in a bedroom are not as aware of the occurrence of a fire in their dwelling unit as when they are awake. By the time they are able to respond to a smoke alarm the suite may be filled with smoke and their escape route from the bedroom blocked. For reasons of life safety the code requires that either an alternate escape route be provided or that the fire be automatically controlled by the use of sprinklers.

Unless a bedroom has a door that leads directly to the *building* exterior, or the *suite* is *sprinklered*, each bedroom must have at least one window openable from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge. This window must provide an unobstructed opening with a minimum area of 0.35 m<sup>2</sup> (3.77 ft<sup>2</sup> or 543 sq inches), and no dimension less than 380 mm (15"). (See drawings below for further clarification).

Basement egress windows present an added challenge. Besides the height, width and overall area requirements that the window must meet, there are certain requirements for the window well surrounding the window.

It is important to note that if a window opens into a window well a clearance of at least 550 mm (about 22") between window and wall of the well is required. An awning style window opening into a window well may pose a challenge in maintaining this clearance and could interfere with the occupant's ability to exit through the window well. The required clearances must be maintained when the window is in the open position.

The 1997 Alberta Building Code (ABC) states the following for bedroom windows and window wells:

### **9.7.1.3. Bedroom Windows**

**1)** *Except where a bedroom door provides access directly to the exterior or the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom shall have at least one outside window openable from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge. (See Appendix A.)*

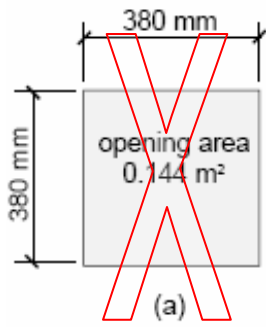
**2)** *Windows referred to in Sentence (1) shall provide unobstructed openings with areas not less than 0.35 m<sup>2</sup> and with no dimension less than 380 mm. (See Article 9.7.1.4. and Appendix A.)*

**3)** *If the window referred to in Sentence (1) is provided with security bars, the security bars shall be openable from the inside without the use of any tools or special knowledge.*

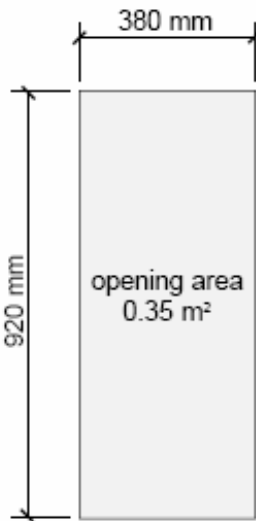
### **9.7.1.4. Window Opening into a Window-Well**

**1)** *Where a window required in Article 9.7.1.3. opens into a window-well, a clearance of not less than 550 mm shall be provided in front of the window.*

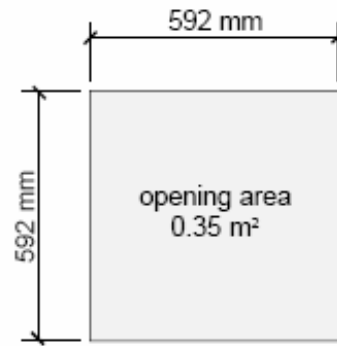
**2)** *Where the sash of a window referred to in Sentence (1) swings towards the window-well, the operation of the sash shall not reduce the clearance in a manner that would restrict escape in an emergency.*



(a) conforms to height and width requirements; does not conform to area requirements



(b)



(b) and (c) conform to height, width, and area requirements

When you have safety-related questions, please contact either your local municipal safety codes officer, or the Safety Services Branch. Safety Services can be contacted by:

Telephone: 1-866-421-6929  
Email: [safety.services@gov.ab.ca](mailto:safety.services@gov.ab.ca), or  
On our website at: ["Ask the Expert"](#)