



# Township Of West Milford

DEPARTMENT  
OF BUILDING SAFETY

1480 Union Valley Road • West Milford, NJ 07480 • Tel:(973) 728-2780 • Fax: (973) 728-2843

## Egress Windows

This handout is based on the **2000 International Residential Code NJ** for 1 & 2 family homes. This is only a guide and cannot cover every situation that you may encounter.

Every sleeping room in a new home or addition shall have at least one operable emergency escape window or door leading directly to the outside. The minimum opening size shall be obtained by normal operation of the window in the fully open position. The window or door shall be operable from the inside without use of a key, tool or special knowledge.

Window requirements:

- All emergency escape windows shall have a net clear opening size of 5.7 square feet.

**Exception 1:** Grade floor windows shall have a net clear opening size of 5.0 square feet

- The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches
- The minimum net clear width shall be 20 inches
- The maximum sill height shall be 44 inches

This section requires emergency escape provisions where occupants may be sleeping during a potential fire buildup. Each sleeping room is to be provided with an exterior window or door that meets the minimum size requirements and is operable for emergency escape by methods that are obvious and clearly understood by all users.

The dimensional criteria of the opening are intended to permit fire service personnel (in full protective clothing with a breathing apparatus) to enter from a ladder, as well as permit occupants to escape. The net clear opening area and minimum dimensions are intended to provide a clear opening through which an occupant can pass to escape the building or a fire fighter can pass to enter the building for rescue or fire suppression activities. Since the emergency escape windows must be usable to all occupants, including children and guests, the required opening dimensions must be achieved by the normal operation of the window from the inside (e.g., sliding, swinging, or lifting the sash). It is impractical to assume that all occupants can operate a window that requires a special sequence of operations to achieve the required opening size. While most occupants are familiar with the normal operation by which to open the window, children and guests are frequently unfamiliar with special procedures necessary to remove the sashes. The time spent in comprehending the special operation unnecessarily delays egress from the bedroom and could lead to panic and further confusion. Thus, windows that achieve the required opening dimensions only by performing operations such as the removal of sashes or mullions are not permitted. **It should be noted that the minimum area cannot be achieved by using both the minimum height and minimum width.** If security grilles, decorations or similar devices are installed on the escape windows, such items must be readily removable to permit occupant escape without the use of any tools, keys, or a force greater than that required for the normal operation of the window. It is

important to note that this window is an element of escape and does not comprise any part of the means of egress unless it is a door with appropriate egress component characteristics.

**Exception 1** is based on the increased ease of access by the fire service to grade-level windows. Since ladders will typically not be required, a reduction in required size is allowed.

