

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

Although bedroom windows are not considered to be ordinary escape routes, many occupants have been saved by using them in an emergency. By the time an occupant is able to respond to a smoke alarm the suite may be filled with smoke and their escape route from the bedroom blocked. Building Code article 9.7.1.2. establishes the general requirement that bedrooms must have at least one window that is large enough that it can be used as an exit in an emergency. (The article does not apply when the bedroom has a door leading directly to the outside or the suite is sprinklered.) Therefore unless the 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 in.) (see drawings below for further clarification). The minimum window area must be achieved without having to remove window sashes or hardware. Also the window can't require support when in the open position.

Basement bedroom 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 on the building exterior. If a window well is required, it must be out from the window at least 550 mm (about 22") to provide safe passage. Awning style windows for example opening into a window well typically do not work because they sometimes cannot provide the necessary clearances and the hardware can obstruct the opening.

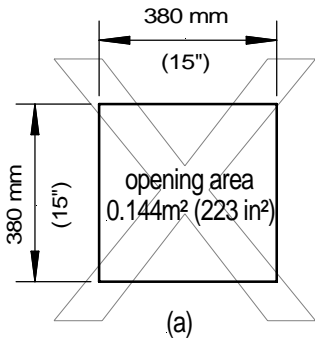
The 2006 Alberta Building Code (ABC) states the following for bedroom windows and window wells:

### **9.7.1.2. Bedroom Windows**

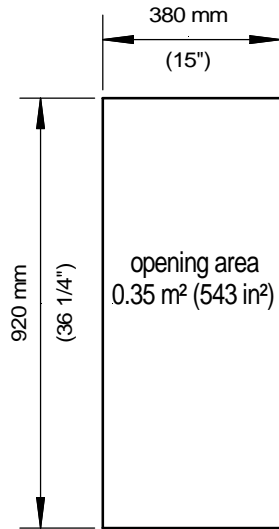
- 1) *Except where the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom or combination bedroom shall have at least one outside window or exterior door openable from the inside without the use of key, tools or special knowledge and without the removal of sashes or hardware.*
- 2) *The window referred to in Sentence (1) shall*
  - a) *provide an unobstructed opening of not less than 0.35 m<sup>2</sup> in area with no dimension less than 380 mm, and*
  - b) *maintain the required opening during an emergency without the need for additional support.*
- 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.*

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

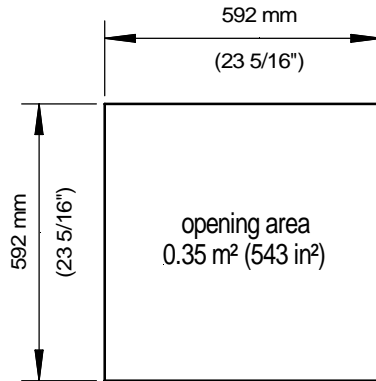
- 1) *Where a window required in Article 9.7.1.2. opens into a window-well, a clearance of not less than 550 mm shall be provided in front of the window.*
- 2) *Where the sash of a window referred to in Sentence (1) swings towards the window well, the operation of the sash shall not reduce the clearance in a manner that would restrict escape in an emergency.*
- 3) *Where a protective enclosure is installed over the window well referred to in Sentence (1), the enclosure shall be openable from the inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge of the opening mechanism.*



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



(b)



(c)

(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)  
[www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca)