# Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

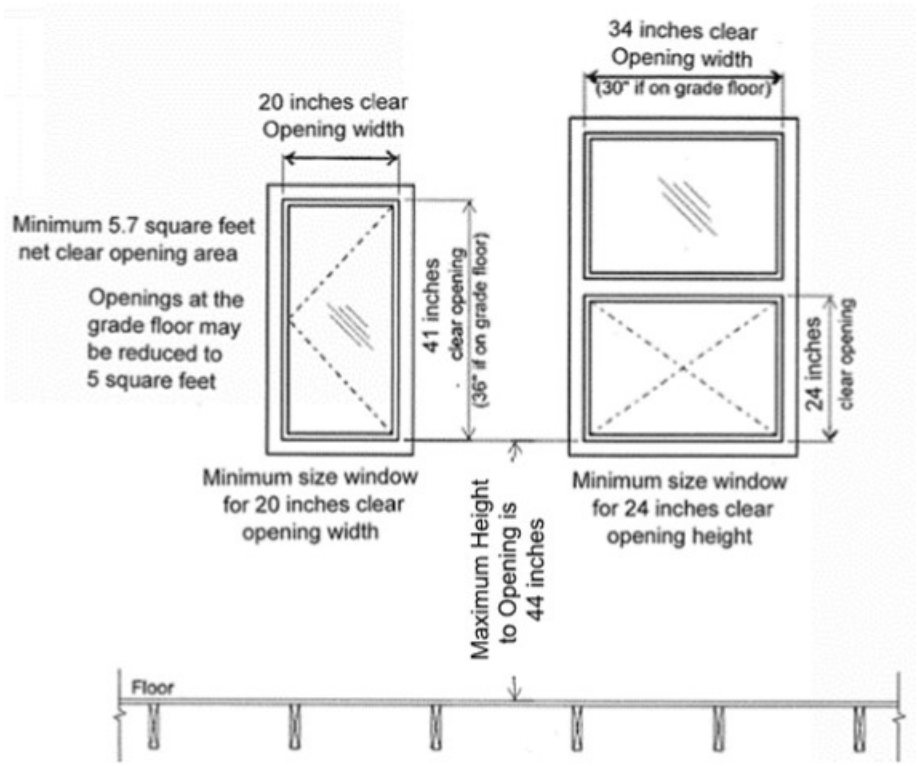
## Residential Emergency Egress Openings

This handout reflects code requirements of the 2021 International Residential Code (IRC) with Washington State Amendments.

## Emergency Escape and Rescue Opening

□ Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have not less than one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be required in each sleeping room. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside without the use of keys, tools, or special knowledge, and open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court providing an unobstructed path with a width of not less than 36 inches (914 mm) that opens to a public way. (R310.1)

□ Where bars, grilles, covers, screens, or opening control devices are placed on emergency escape and rescue openings the minimum net clear opening sizes shall comply, and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of key, tool, special knowledge, or force greater than that required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening. (R310.4)




Revised 5/14/2024

**Minimum Emergency Egress and Rescue Opening Dimensions**

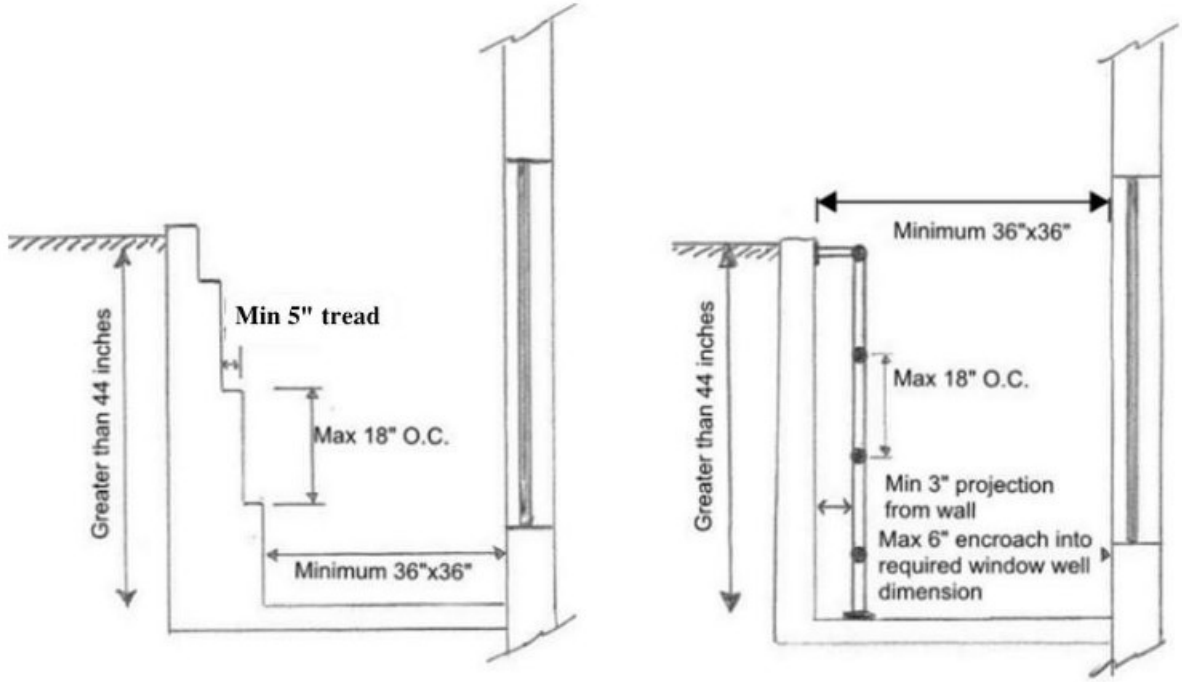
**Area Wells in Conjunction with Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings**

□ The horizontal area of the area well shall be not less than 9 square feet, with a horizontal projection and width not less than 36 inches. The size of the area well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened. (R310.4.1)

□ Area wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps useable with the emergency escape and rescue opening in the fully opened position and shall not encroach into the required dimensions of the window well. (R310.4.2)

□ Ladders, rungs, and steps shall have an inside width of not less than 12 inches, shall project not less than 3 inches from the wall or have a minimum 5-inch tread depth, and be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the area well. (R310.4.2.1 / R310.4.2.2)

□ Where bars, grilles, covers, screens or similar devices are placed bulkhead enclosures or area wells that serve emergency escape and rescue openings, the minimum net clear opening size shall be no less than the emergency escape and rescue opening as shown in the figures above. Such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key or tool or force greater than that required for the normal operation of the escape and rescue opening, and shall not obstruct access to or from the emergency escape and rescue opening. (R310.4.4)




**Area Well Dimensions and Access Features**