

Residential Window Changeout and Emergency Escape/Rescue Opening

Background

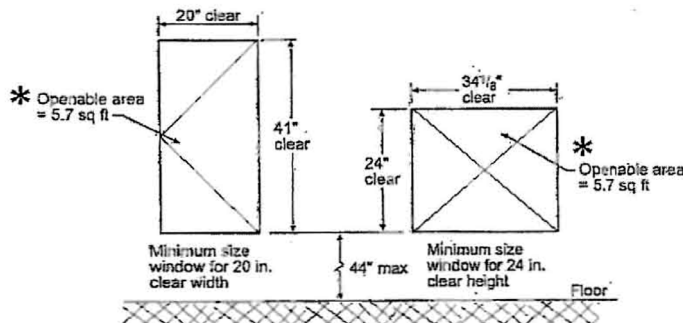
Because so many fire deaths occur as the result of occupants of residential buildings being asleep at the time of a fire, Section 1031 of the 2025 California Building Code and Section 319 of the 2025 California Residential Code requires that basements, habitable attics and every sleeping rooms below the fourth story shall have at least a window or a door that may be used for emergency escape or rescue in Group R occupancies.

The code intends that the openings required for emergency escape or rescue be located on the exterior of the building so that rescue can be effected from the exterior or the occupants may escape from that opening to the exterior of the building without having to travel through the interior of the building, in which the normal exit paths are most likely blocked.

Emergency escape and rescue opening requirements

Per section 1031 of the 2025 California Building Code and Section 319 of the 2025 California Residential Code, "Emergency escape and rescue openings" shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 sqft. The minimum net clear opening height dimension shall be 24 inches. The minimum net clear opening width dimension shall be 20 inches. Openings shall have the bottom of the clear opening not greater than 44 inches measured from the floor."

The *minimum* opening size and *maximum* height from the floor are illustrated in the figure below:



* Where the opening occurs at grade level, the opening need only be 5 square feet

Requirements for Replacing Bedroom Windows in Existing Homes

Construction Year	Bedroom Egress Requirement	Net Opening Size	Min. Opening Dimensions	Max. Height from Floor
Prior to 1964	No	12 sqft (Total Window Sizes in the same room)	None	None
1964 – 1980	Yes	5 sqft (Net)	22" (H) X 22" (W)	48" to Sill
1980 – 12/31/07	Yes	5.7 sqft (Net)	24" X 20"	44" to Sill
01/01/08 – Present	Yes	5.7 sqft (Net) 5 sq. ft. (Grade Level Only)	24" X 20"	44" to Clear Opening

A building permit is required for any window replacement. Some restrictions and/or modifications might be required when replacing or modifying any bedroom window that does not meet the emergency escape and rescue requirements mentioned above. All replacement windows shall comply with the California Energy Code with U = 0.3 (max) and SHGC = 0.23 (max) and shall have safety glazing if located in hazardous locations. Battery-operated smoke and/or carbon monoxide alarms are required per Sections R310 and R311 of the 2025 California Residential Code, if not already installed.

Requirements for Replacing Doors in Existing Homes

Swinging doors separating conditioned space from outside or adjacent unconditioned space shall have U=0.2 (max). Fire-rated garage doors are exempt. Glazed doors will be treated as fenestration products. Please contact or consult with OC Development Services at (714) 667-8888 for further information.



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Owner: _____ Address: _____

APN: _____ Legal: _____

Scope of Work: _____

Please draw a Site/Floor Plan of the project site and indicate the location of each window being replaced

Door	Window	Room	Existing Size/Type	New Size/Type	Egress