

Fremont Building Official Code Enforcement

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WINDOW SIZING AND MEANS OF EMERGENCY EGRESS

When designing and placing windows in your new construction be sure to check the provisions of the code and check the window sizing requirements before framing. It takes a pretty large window to meet the requirements of the building and safety codes. The minimum size of for a second story window opening is 5.7 square feet of net opening; for instance a 28 in. by 30 in. opening (5.8 sqft) would meet that requirement while a 28 in. by 28 in. opening would not (5.4 sqft). This measurement is taken as the net clear opening. For a double hung window this as measured with the bottom sash raised and the available width and height opening is measured.

Meeting window size for means of emergency egress, the following requirements are from Life safety Code and Building Codes.

.....Life Safety Code 101 Section 24.2.2.1 Number of Means of Escape.

In any dwelling or dwelling unit of two rooms or more, every sleeping room and every living area shall have not less than one primary means of escape and one secondary means of escape....

.....The International Code Council provides for similar requirements in the International Residential Code, Section R310 Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings.

Two means of escape must be provided – a primary and a secondary. Generally the doorway of entry provides for the primary means of egress while a second door or window may provide for the secondary means of escape. A window must meet certain minimum requirements, generally among them are:

- an outside window operable from the inside without the use of tools, keys, or special effort
- sized such to provide a net clear opening of not less than 5.7 square feet and further restricted to be not less than 20 inches in width and not less than 24 inches in height
- the bottom of the window opening is not to be more than 44 in. above the floor.
- the window must be within 20 ft of grade.
- the window shall be directly accessible to fire department rescue apparatus

This is a safety provision reducing the risk of being trapped if an exit pathway is obstructed by fire or some other hazard. This requirement is a minimum standard for all residential dwellings - some exceptions do exist – further consult the code if you are having problems adhering to this requirement.

Additionally, IRC 2006 requires that the bottom of a window (lowest part of the clear opening) shall be a minimum of 24 inches above the finished floor of the room in which the window is located when that window is located more than 72 inches above the finished grade or surface below.

Make sure that windows as required meet the above requirements; ask the supplier to insure that windows meet egress codes. Place headers such that the bottom of the window height also complies with the minimum height above finished floor.