

**MINNEAPOLIS FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU POLICY #10-1
ESCAPE WINDOWS**

Original Issue 3-10-05

Last Revision 3-26-08

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ISSUE:

Escape windows in sleeping rooms.

CODE REQUIREMENTS:

Every sleeping room is to have at least one (1) window that has a clear opening with minimum dimensions of 24 inches high, 20 inches wide and a minimum area of 5 sq. ft. and a maximum sill height of 48 inches if the room was built prior to 1983. Rooms built in 1983 and later are to have windows that are a minimum of 24 inches high, 20 inches wide and have a minimum area of 5.7 sq. ft. and a maximum sill height of 44 inches.

Exceptions:

- 1. Buildings protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system.*
- 2. Escape windows are not required when the room has a door that leads directly to the exterior of the building.*
- 3. Escape windows are not required from rooms having two (2) separate means of escape, provided that the means of escape are independent of each other and they pass through not more than one adjacent nonlockable room.*

PROBLEM:

Many sleeping rooms do not have windows that meet the pre 1983 requirements. The windows may meet the minimum height, width and sill heights but do not comply with the minimum area requirements. In some cases the building exterior wall (which may be of brick construction) would need to be altered to achieve the area requirements. The primary reason for these windows is to provide an occupant with a means of escaping a fire that has developed in that particular dwelling unit and which has blocked the occupant's access to the primary exiting system. (The minimum opening size of 24 inches high by 20 inches wide is deemed sufficient for most occupants to escape and the glazed surface of five (5) sq. ft. is primarily for firefighter access and is not required to be readily openable by an occupant).

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ACCEPTABLE MEANS of COMPLIANCE:

1. The window requirements do not apply to buildings that are protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system that meets the requirements of NFPA #13 or NFPA #13R. (MSFC)
2. Existing windows that have clear openings of at least 24 inches high and 20 inches wide (3 1/3 sq. ft. area) with the bottom of the sills within 48 inches of the floor (or a permanently mounted step, refer to note #2) and have a glazed surface of at least five (5) sq. ft. in area are deemed acceptable.

NOTE #1: The above criteria meets the pre 1983 fire code requirements with the exception of the five (5) sq. ft. of openable area. New windows or existing windows in new dwelling units are to meet the post 1983 requirements. Existing windows that exceed the pre 1983 criteria can not be altered to less than their present condition. (MFD Policy)

NOTE #2: One permanent step or platform may be installed to achieve the 48" sill height requirement. The step is to be at least as wide as the window opening; it is to be no higher than 8" above the finished floor; it is to be at least 18" depth from the wall; it is to be securely mounted to the floor and/or wall.

3. The upgrading of escape windows is not required when it is determined by this department that the installation of those windows is not feasible (due to the need for significant structural modification, etc.) and an approved fire sprinkler system is installed. This system may be a modified type of sprinkler system that may not meet the strict requirements of NFPA. (MFD Policy)

Note: refer to MFD Policy #10-4 for acceptable window security bars.