

Building Standards Advisory

Promoting construction of safe, healthy, habitable buildings

Bedroom Windows

Question

“What are the minimum requirements for bedroom windows in homes?”

Answer

The National Building Code (NBC) 2015 requires a minimum window size for bedrooms for the purpose of providing natural ventilation and emergency escape requirements.

Background

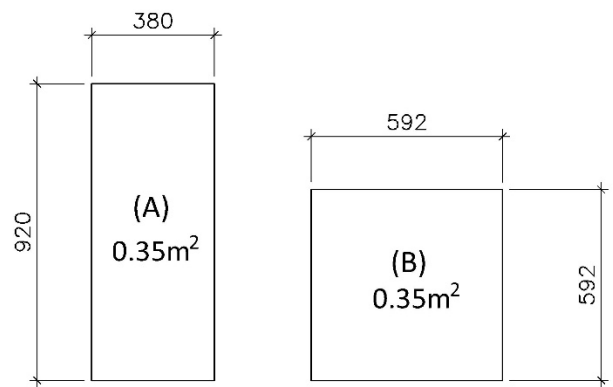
The NBC 2015 includes general provisions for the placement of windows, doors, and skylights. The NBC 2015, Division B, Sentence 9.9.10.1(2). states:

The window shall:

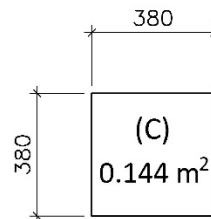
- provide an unobstructed opening of not less than 0.35 m^2 in area with no dimension less than 380 mm, and
- maintain the required opening during an emergency without the need for additional support.

Windows or Doors for Bedrooms

Unless a dwelling is *sprinklered*, or a bedroom has a doorway to the exterior, every bedroom or combination bedroom must be provided with at least one outside window or exterior door that can be opened from the inside to provide an emergency means of escape or rescue. The window or door must open without the use of tools or special knowledge and have no dimension less than 380 mm (15 in.). The path of escape must not go through nor open onto another room, floor, or space. Bedroom windows required to serve as emergency means of escape or rescue need to remain in the open position without the need for support during the emergency exiting. (See Figure 1)



(A) and (B) - Conform to all requirements



(C) - Conforms to height and width requirements; does not conform to area requirements

Figure 1

Compliance with *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act, Regulations, and the National Building Code (NBC) 2015* is addressed in this advisory. Words in italics, other than Act and Regulation titles, are defined in the NBC 2015.



Window Height Placement

It is recommended that window sills intended for emergency *exit* be no more than 1.5 m (5 ft.) above the floor. Where this is difficult to provide (such as *basement* bedroom windows), access to the windows can be improved through means such as built-in furniture beneath the window. (See Figure 2)

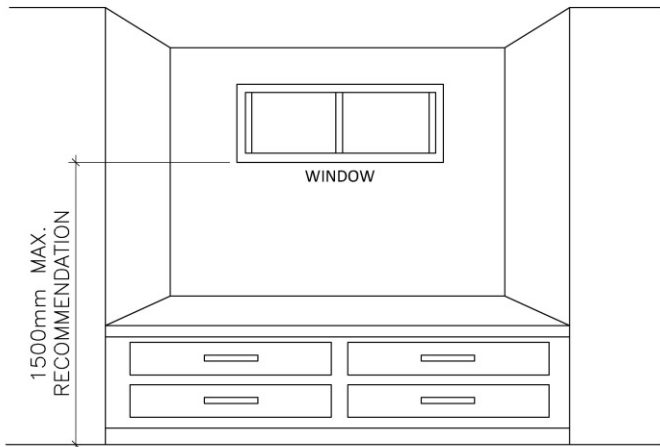


Figure 2

Basement Windows

Where a bedroom is located in a *basement*, an escape window or door must be located in the bedroom. It is not sufficient to rely on egress through other *basement* space to another escape window or door.

A window in a *basement* bedroom may open into a window well depending upon the height of the finished grade.

Where a window well is required to serve for escape or rescue is covered with a protective cover, the cover needs to be openable from the inside without the use of tools, keys or special knowledge. When a bedroom window opens into a window well, it must have a clearance of at least 760 mm (30 in.) in front of the window.

Once the 760 mm (30 in.) is provided, no additional clearance is required for windows with sliders, casements or inward-opening awning style windows. However, an additional clearance is required for outward-opening awning style windows to provide the required 760 mm (30 in.) beyond the outer edge of the sash.

(See Figures 3 & 4)

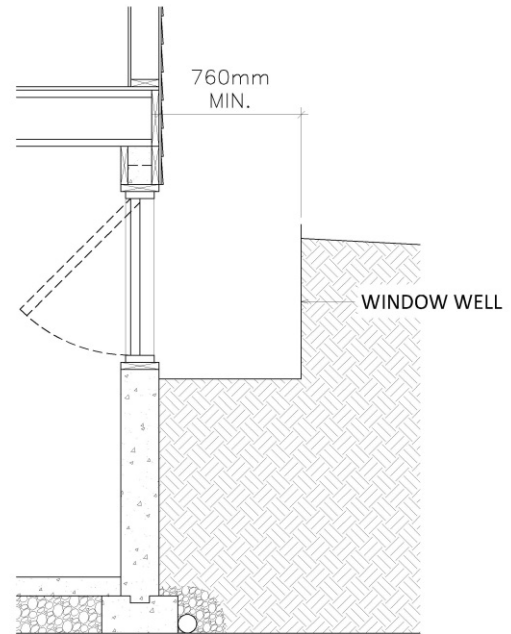


Figure 3

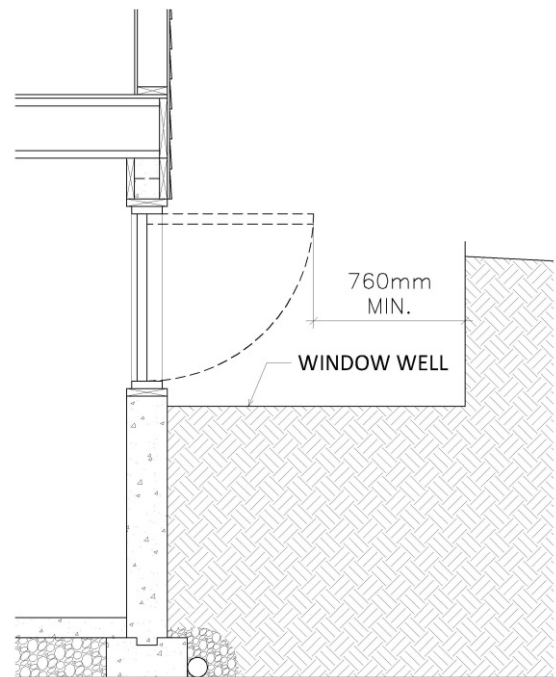


Figure 4



Other Window Considerations

Ice build-up that prevents or restricts opening a window is a concern with any type of window. With improved heating and ventilating systems in houses and improved window construction, ice build-up appears to be less of a concern that it may have been in the past.

Latches incorporated on the inside of the window frame are not considered to require special knowledge to release. These latches are typically engaged, for security or to ensure the window is shut tightly, and released as part of the normal opening process.

Insect screens, security bars, grilles or similar devices should be easily removable or releasable from the inside without the use of a key, tool or special knowledge.

Children who are expected to escape through a bedroom window on their own should be taught how to open the window and remove or release any screens or bars that may be installed. Home fire drills should include practice in using the window as a means of escape.

For those people who are too young or physically infirm to escape on their own through a window, special precautions should be considered such as:

- installation of a smoke detector in the bedroom to assist with early detection; and
- relocating the bedroom to the first *storey* or closer to the door to assist with their rescue.

Building and Technical Standards Branch
1430 - 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3T2
(306) 787-4113 Phone
(306) 798-4172 Fax
btstandards@gov.sk.ca
www.saskatchewan.ca/btstandards

Building Standards Advisory
Bedroom Windows
July 2001
Revised February 2018

Original approved and signed by:
Chief Building Official

This advisory is published by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Government Relations for purposes of providing information to users on the topic contained herein. In case of conflict between *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act* (the UBAS Act) and Regulations, and the National Building Code (NBC) 2015 and this advisory, provisions of the UBAS Act, Regulations, and the NBC 2015 shall apply.