

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENT FORM
FOR PROPOSED CODE CHANGES**
(This form must be submitted electronically)

IRC-41, R310.1

Author/requestor: Richard Lockrem

Email address: rich.lockrem@mn.state.us

Telephone number: 651.284.5868

Firm/Association affiliation, if any: DLI

Proposed Code Change - Language

SECTION R310 EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS

R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue required.

Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where *basements* contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room, **but not be required in adjoining areas of the basement.** Where emergency escape and rescue openings are provided they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) measured from the finished floor to the bottom of the clear opening. Where a door opening having a threshold below the adjacent ground elevation serves as an emergency escape and rescue opening and is provided with a bulkhead enclosure, the bulkhead enclosure shall comply with [Section R310.3](#). The net clear opening dimensions required by this section shall be obtained by the normal operation of the emergency escape and rescue opening from the inside. Emergency escape and rescue openings with a finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall be provided with a window well in accordance with [Section R310.2](#). Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a *yard* or court that opens to a public way.

Exception:

1. Basements used only to house mechanical equipment and not exceeding total floor area of 200 square feet (18.58 m²); or

2. An alteration or repair of an existing basement area which includes smoke alarm coverage in accordance with NFPA 72; or

3. An alteration or repair of an existing basement area when provided with an automatic fire sprinkler system throughout in accordance with Section P2904 of this code or NFPA 13D.

R310.1.1 Minimum opening area.

All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet (0.530 m²).

Exception: *Grade* floor openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5 square feet (0.465 m²).

R310.1.2 Minimum opening height.

The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches (610 mm).

R310.1.3 Minimum opening width.

The minimum net clear opening width shall be 20 inches (508 mm).

R310.1.4 Operational constraints.

Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge.

Exception: Window opening control devices approved and installed in accordance with ASTM F 2090 that do not require the use of keys or tools to operate.

Proposed Code Change – Need and Reason

[R310.1 Scoping] The proposal revises the second sentence to read - Where *basements* contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room, **but not be required in adjoining areas of the basement.** The text was revised to add language that had been included in previous IRC model code documents. The language limited the authority having jurisdiction from requiring an additional emergency escape and rescue opening in areas adjacent to sleeping rooms with compliant emergency escape and rescue openings in basements.

[R310.1 Exceptions] The proposed addition of exceptions 2 and 3 to IRC Section R310.1 are intended to provide the homeowner and contractor alternatives when remodeling or finishing an existing basement without an existing emergency escape and rescue opening. Numerous dwellings were constructed prior to the requirements for emergency escape and rescue openings in the 1970 Uniform Building Code (UBC) adopted by Minnesota on July 1, 1972. The 1985 UBC deleted the text requiring emergency escape and rescue openings in basements then added the requirement back in the 1988 UBC. The 1985 UBC had an effective date of adoption of February 17, 1987 and utilized until July 16, 1990 when the 1988 UBC became effective.

These dwellings when required to add an emergency escape and rescue opening(s) can have a negative effect on the structures foundation design and also create foundation potential drainage issues by creating a window well when needed.

This proposal is reasonable because it offers an option to provide alternate methods of life safety by installing adequate smoke alarm coverage or fire sprinkler coverage allowing the occupants sufficient

warning and time to escape a potential fire hazard in lieu of constructing and installing emergency escape and rescue openings.

[R310.1.4 Operational constraints] The new exception regarding window opening control devices is intended to allow the authority having jurisdiction to permit homeowners and contractors to install window control devices on window units for fall prevention. Apparently jurisdictions have denied homeowners and contractors from installing these devices based on IRC Section R310.1.4 operational constraints language and the term “special knowledge” for installations on emergency escape and rescue openings. The exception does require that window opening control devices shall be approved and installed in accordance with ASTM F 2090 that do not require the use of keys or tools to operate.

Proposed Code Change – Cost/Benefit Analysis

The proposed new exceptions offered in the proposal would provide a significant cost savings as compared to the structural modifications and window installation needed to provide an emergency escape and rescue openings in an existing basement foundation. The other new provisions offered by the proposal present no additional cost impact, but are intended to enable more uniform enforcement of the code.

Other Factors to Consider Related to Proposed Code Change

1. Is this proposed code change meant to:

change language contained in a published code book? If so, list section(s).

change language contained in an existing amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, list Rule part(s).

delete language contained in a published code book? If so, list section(s).

delete language contained in an existing amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, list Rule part(s).

neither; this language will be new language, not found in the code book or in Minnesota Rule.

2. Is this proposed code change required by a Minnesota Statute or new legislation? If so, please provide the citation to the Statute or legislation.

No

3. Will this proposed code change impact other sections of a published code book or of an amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, please list the affected sections or rule parts.

No

4. Will this proposed code change impact other parts of the Minnesota State Building Code? If so, please list the affected parts of the Minnesota State Building Code.

No

5. Who are the parties affected or segments of industry affected by this proposed code change?

Code officials, building designers, contractors, building owners

6. Can you think of other means or methods to achieve the purpose of the proposed code change? If so, please explain what they are and why your proposed change is the preferred method or means to achieve the desired result.

No

7. Are you aware of any federal requirement or regulation related to this proposed code change? If so, please list the regulation or requirement.

No