

**BUILDING CODE  
INTERPRETATION**

DIVISION:  
Code Enforcement  
INTERPRETATION No:  
CI-B-02-16  
EFFECTIVE DATE:  
April 14, 2016

**SUBJECT: EMERGENCY ESCAPE & RESCUE OPENINGS – WHEN REQUIRED w/ ALTERATIONS**

**Purpose:** Clarify when emergency escape and rescue openings (hereafter referred to as egress windows) are required on existing single-family dwellings or townhouses undergoing repair or alteration.

**Question 1:** Does at least one window within each existing bedroom have to be upgraded to an egress window when windows are being replaced or when alterations are taking place within a dwelling?

**Answer:** No. However, the replacement window should be the manufacturer's largest standard size window that will fit within the existing frame or existing rough opening. The window shall be permitted to be of the same operating style as the existing window or a style that provides for an equal or greater window opening area than the existing window.

**Comment:** A building permit is not required to replace windows. Unlike the smoke detector code provisions, which require mandatory upgrading to current code whenever an alteration is being done, there is no similar code language requiring window upgrading for either egress or ventilation when alterations, including significant renovations, are being done to an existing dwelling.

**Question 2:** Does at least one window serving a basement or habitable attic level have to be upgraded to an egress window when windows are being replaced or when alterations are taking place within the dwelling?

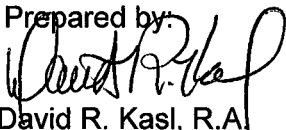
**Answer:** No, for the same reasons as the Answer to Question 1.

**Question 3:** When are egress windows required on an alteration/renovation project?

**Answer:** An egress window shall be provided for the following situations:


1. A room previously used for other purposes is being converted to a bedroom.
2. An unfinished basement area is being converted to a bedroom(s).
3. An unfinished basement is being converted to habitable rooms other than a bedroom and additional smoke detectors are not being installed for alternative protection as allowed by code.
4. A new window is voluntarily being added to a bedroom that currently does not have an egress window.
5. A new window is voluntarily being added to an unfinished basement or habitable attic that currently does not have an egress window.
6. An egress window or the only exterior window serving an existing bedroom is being eliminated for whatever reason (interior room reconfiguration, being blocked off by a proposed addition, etc.).

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