
EGRESS WINDOWS



City of East Lansing

Planning Building Development
410 Abbot Road, Second Floor
East Lansing, MI 48823
Ph. 517-319-6871 or 517-319-6810
Website: cityofeastlansing.com

This publication provides guidelines for egress windows in residential occupancies. The code requirements herein are not all-inclusive and should not be construed to represent all code requirements for your project and are representative of all conditions that you may encounter. Apply for your permits at <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/1979/21068/Apply-for-a-Permit-Online>.

Basements and every sleeping room are required to have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening (egress window). Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency escape and rescue openings are required in each sleeping room, but you need not to provide another egress window if there are other habitable rooms in the basement. The bedroom window(s) suffices for the habitable rooms.

If you have an existing home and you add a sleeping room in an unfinished basement, the code requires that you install an egress window in the sleeping room or rooms. Likewise, if you create habitable space in your basement other than a bedroom and you currently do not have an egress window, the code would require that you install one as part of the installation of the habitable room.

SIZE REQUIREMENTS

An egress window must comply with four 2015 Michigan Residential Code criteria:

Minimum clear width of opening: 20"

Minimum clear height of opening: 24"

Minimum net clear opening: 5.7 square feet (5.0 square feet for grade floor openings)

Maximum sill height above finished floor: 44"

The net clear opening of a window refers to the actual free and clear space that exists when the window is open. It is not the rough opening size or the size of the glass panel, but the actual opening that a person can crawl through. The window opening must be operational from the inside without use of keys, tools or special knowledge.

At first glance, it might be assumed that a 20" by 24" window would be in compliance with the egress code requirements. However, those dimensions would yield a net clear opening of only 3.3 square feet. To achieve the minimum required net clear opening of 5.7 square feet, a window with a 20" wide clear opening would have to be 42" high. Likewise, a window with a 24" high clear opening would have to be 34" wide.

Nearly all window manufacturers specify which of their windows meet egress code requirements in their catalogs and list the net clear opening of their windows. This should take the guesswork out of selecting a window for your addition or remodeling project. Also, the sales person who sells you the window should be able to help you select a code compliant window provided that they know you need an egress window.

BASEMENT EGRESS WINDOWS

Basement egress windows present an added challenge. Besides the height, width and overall square footage requirements that the window must comply with, there are certain requirements for the window well surrounding the window. Window wells must:

- Allow the window to be fully opened.
- Provide a minimum 9 square feet of floor area, with a minimum dimension of a 36” width and 36” length.
- Contain a permanently affixed ladder or steps for climbing out of the window well if the depth exceeds 44”.
- The ladder must be at least 12” wide and project not less than 3” from the window well. It cannot be obstructed by the open window or encroach on the required window well dimensions by more than 6”.
- Window wells may be made of rust resistant metal, treated wood, wood naturally resistant to decay, concrete, masonry, or plastic. Some window well designs have steps built or molded into them.
- If an egress window is located under a deck or porch, the code requires at least 48 inches between the top of the window well and the bottom of the deck or porch joists.

PERMIT PROCESS

- You must submit an application and attach supporting documents online at: <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/1979/21068/Apply-for-a-Permit-Online>. The application will be converted to permit and will then advance to the plan review process.
- A building permit is issued when all required approvals have been obtained and applicable fees have been paid. Once your permits are issued (email), you must post a copy on the job site until the project has received final inspection.
- A building permit must be issued within 6 months of the application date or the application will be canceled.

***HELPFUL HINT:** As the property owner, you may obtain permits in your own name; however, if a contractor is to perform the work, it is strongly recommended that the contractor secure the permit and be listed as the responsible party. In this way, the city will be in a better position to assist you in gaining compliance with codes if the work is defective. A contractor must be properly licensed in order to obtain a permit.*

BEFORE OBTAINING A PERMIT

FEES

- The fee schedule is located at <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/DocumentCenter/View/2772/Building-Division-Fees-PDF?bidId=>
- Fees may be paid by cash/check, debit or credit card (Discover, Visa or MasterCard), online (Invoice Cloud).

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Prior to issuance of any building permit, an approval is required from the City of East Lansing office of Planning & Community Development for your egress window installation if the installation involves a window well. This is required to ensure compliance with all applicable zoning requirements. They are in the East Lansing City Hall, 2nd floor, 410 Abbot Road; phone 517-319-6930.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A *Certificate of Appropriateness application* is required for new construction, additions, alterations, moving, demolition and repairs of property in any East Lansing Historic District. Questions regarding a *Certificate of Appropriateness* should be directed to the Community Development Analyst at ph. 517-319-6828. The Historic Preservation Code applies to:

- Exterior changes such as additions, alterations (adding or changing windows, doors, etc.) to buildings (including garages and sheds) in designated Historic Districts.
- All sides of a structure visible from the street (generally the front and sides).
- Features protected by the Code include, but are not limited to: a building’s general shape; gables, dormers and other roof features; cornices, brackets and eaves; size, shape, arrangement, number and size of window panes and muntins (exterior grids); beveled, leaded and stained glass; door and window trim; ornamental moldings; distinctive siding, such as stone, stucco, brick or patterned shingling; distinctive roofing, such as false thatch, slate and Spanish tile.

BUILDING CODE

Your project is required to comply with the 2015 Michigan Residential Code (MRC), effective February 8, 2016, which incorporates the 2015 International Residential Code (IRC) for residential construction. You may purchase the MRC through the State of Michigan Bureau of Construction Codes, ph. 517-241-9313, or by visiting their website at <http://www.michigan.gov/bcc>.

MINIMUM SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All submissions for a garage or shed must include the following:

- Electronic set of building plans (see below for requirements).
- Electronic copy of the house location survey.

BUILDING PLANS

Building plans must meet the requirements or show the items listed below, if applicable to your project.

- Minimum scale of $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$. All dimensions must be shown.
- Minimum sheet size: $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$. No pencil sketches.
- Edition of the code used for the design.
- Name, address and phone number of the building designer, if not noted on the permit application.
- List of material specifications including, but not limited to, grade and species of lumber, concrete strength and steel strength.
- Location of smoke alarms.
- Floor plans of all levels with all rooms labeled.
- Foundation plan.
- Footing details. The minimum footing depth is 42".
- Location of safety glazing.
- Structural details of connections.
- Typical wall section showing wall bracing and sheathing thickness (special products or devices require an evaluation report from an approved testing laboratory).
- Elevations (front, sides and rear) indicating window and door location and dimensions.

HOUSE LOCATION SURVEY

If your egress window requires an installation of a window well or other exterior alterations, a house location survey may be required. If you do not have a copy of your house location survey, review your loan closing documents or contact your mortgage lending institution to obtain one. If you are unable to locate a copy of your survey through these sources, you will be required to hire a certified land surveyor or civil engineer to have one prepared. House location surveys must meet the following requirements:

- No reduced, enlarged or faxed copies.
- The area of the addition drawn to scale.
- Provide the square footage or overall dimensions of the addition.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES

You must call the MISS DIG System, a free service, at **811 or 800-482-7171**, at least 3 full working days before excavating to ensure that the construction does not interfere with underground utility lines. The MISS DIG System member utilities will mark the approximate location of their underground public utility lines at no charge. MISS DIG System, Inc. DOES NOT MARK! If you fail to contact Miss Dig and damage occurs, you may be liable for all costs of repair.

INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

A copy of the approved permit, plat or grading plan and building plans must be on the job site and must be available to the inspector during each inspection. Approval must be obtained prior to proceeding with the next applicable element.

- **Building Rough:** New window rough opening framed or cut into concrete or masonry wall. Excavation for placement or construction of window well.
- **Building Final:** Window is installed; window well in installed or completed; window well ladder in place; all siding and window trim completed.

SCHEDULING AN INSPECTION

It is the responsibility of the permit holder or their representative to notify the city when the stages of construction are reached that requires an inspection. Ladders, scaffolds, and testing equipment required to complete an inspection must be provided. Inspection requests may be made by calling our main office number or your inspector directly.

Administrative Secretary	517-319-6871
Administrative Secretary	517-319-6810
Plan Reviewer	517-319-6803
Building Inspector	517-319-6921
Electrical Inspector	517-319-6807
Plumbing Inspector	517-319-6816
Mechanical Inspector	517-319-6893
Building Official	517-319-6878