

Department of Regulatory Services

Fire Inspection Policy #10-1

Revised Jan. 26, 2025

The Minnesota State Fire Code requires every sleeping room to have at least one window which can be used for emergency escape.

- Rooms built prior to 1983: The clear opening is to have minimum dimensions of 24 inches high and 20 inches wide with a sill height not exceeding 48 inches above the floor. The total area of the window is to be not less than five square feet.
- Rooms built after 1983: The clear opening is to have minimum dimensions of 24 inches high and 20 inches window with a sill height not exceeding 44 inches above the floor. The total area of the window may not be less than 5.7 square feet.

Exceptions:

- Escape windows are not required in buildings protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system.
- Escape windows are not required when the room has a door that leads directly to the exterior of the building.
- Windows are not required from rooms having two 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.

Some existing sleeping rooms do not have windows that meet some or all of the pre 1983 requirements. In some cases, the building's exterior wall (which may be of brick construction) may need to be altered to achieve all of the requirements. The primary reason for these windows is to provide an occupant with a means of escape from a sleeping room when fire has developed within that dwelling unit, and it blocks the occupants' access to the primary exiting system.

The minimum opening size of 24 inches by 20 inches is deemed sufficient for most occupants to escape and the glazed surface of five (5) square feet is primarily for firefighter access and is not required to be readily openable by an occupant.

The following are acceptable means of compliance:

- Buildings protected throughout with approved automatic sprinkler systems designed to NFPA 13 or NFPA 13R, do not require escape windows.
- Existing windows that have a clear opening of at least 24 inches high and 20 inches wide (3 1/3 square feet are) with the bottom of the sill 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) square feet in area are deemed acceptable.

NOTE #1: The above criteria meet the pre 1983 fire code requirements with the exception of the five (5) square feet 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 cannot be altered to less than their present condition. (FIS Policy)

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

- 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 automatic sprinkler system is installed. This system may be a modified type of sprinkler system that may not meet the strict requirements of NFPA.

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact 311 at 612-673-3000. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. Para asistencia, llame al 311. Rau kev pab 311. Hadii aad Caawimaad u baahantahay 311.