

BASEMENTS AS LIVING SPACE

This is in regard to the question on the use of basements for living space without adequate egress windows or exits. Living rooms, dens, bedrooms and similar uses require a second means of escape of at least 5.7 square feet.

The minimum "**net clearance opening of egress windows must be 5.7 square feet**", and the sill height must be not more than 44 inches above the floor. The minimum net clear opening height is 24 inches, and the minimum net clear opening width is 20 inches, with a total net opening of **820 square inches**. When using a double hung window, the 5.7 square feet of open-able area must be in the bottom sash only. **2003 NFPA 101 24-2.2.3**

Considering the difficulty in providing the proper egress in existing condo units, the following options are permitted:

1. Sprinkler the entire unit
2. Provide the proper egress window(s) and/or window well as needed.
3. Remove all furnishings that make the area in useable space. (beds, sofas, chairs, computer or computer table, pool table, office desk, etc.). Have a letter written and filed with the deed indicating that the basement is not permitted for useable space. (other than storage, laundry and mechanical). Prior to anyone constructing, renovating, altering or using the basement for living space, a permit must be obtained from the Vermont Division of Fire Safety.

This is taken verbatim from a letter from Bob Patterson who is the Regional Director for the Department of Fire Safety, dated Wednesday, June 4, 2008.

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