



Southwest  
New Brunswick  
Service Commission

## Bedrooms in basements

Maybe it's the unexpected bundle of joy – or the university student who can't go to classes: sometimes, homeowners look to the basement to create a new bedroom. Those who are thinking about renovating a basement to create bedroom space should be aware of a couple of minor hurdles. The most significant issue is the need for an egress window: there needs to be enough space to install a window that, when open, is no less than 15" in the least dimension and presents .35 m<sup>2</sup> (545 square inches) in space. [9.9.10.1(2)(a)] ([See more on egress windows here.](#))

If that window can be installed (or already exists) above finished ground, then there are few other concerns. However, if the window opens to any point below ground, there are a few extra requirements in the National Building Code. The window has to open into a protected space – a window well – that must provide at least 76 cm (30 inches) of space, and "not reduce the clearance in a manner that would restrict escape in an emergency." In other words, an awning window that has sufficient opening space at the window, but is too close to adjacent ground, wouldn't meet these criteria.

If the window well has a cover of some nature – such as a transparent one to keep snow out – that enclosure has to be removable, hinged or otherwise easily manipulated to allow access and escape.

The only issue left is to ensure a smoke alarm is in the bedroom. If the house has a wood stove, pellet stove, gas appliance or attached garage, a carbon monoxide alarm is also required, in or within 5 metres (~15 feet) of the bedroom. [9.32.3.9]

Note that if such work is part of a larger renovation that provides cooking facilities, a washroom and the like, this creates a secondary suite, and in this case, renovations must include sound-deadening insulation to separate the secondary suite from the rest of the dwelling. If this living area exceeds 80m<sup>2</sup>, or 80 per cent of the unique space of the rest of the dwelling, then by Code, the suite is deemed a legal duplex, requiring fire separations. [9.1.2.1]