



Michigan Department of Consumer & Industry Services  
Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety  
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**Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety  
Technical Bulletin**

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**Basement Emergency Escape  
and Rescue Openings**

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Technical bulletins are issued to provide clarification on issues that arise regarding code administration and enforcement. The information provided in the bulletin is developed to promote uniform interpretation and enforcement of the state codes by the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety.

## BASEMENT EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS

### Issue

The Michigan Residential Code (MRC) requires that basements with habitable space and every sleeping room have at least one openable emergency escape window or exterior door opening for emergency escape and rescue. Two questions have been raised regarding the application of this code requirement:

1. When does a basement without a bedroom require an egress window?
2. If a basement contains a bedroom and a separate habitable space such as a recreation room, are emergency escape and rescue windows or exterior door openings required from each space?

### Code

R310.1 of the MRC sets forth the provisions when emergency escape and rescue openings are required in the following areas:

1. Basements with habitable space.
2. Every sleeping room.

Section R201.1, provides for the applicability of definitions: *“Unless otherwise expressly stated, the following words and terms shall, for the purposes of this code, have the meanings indicated in this chapter.”*

Section R202, defines a habitable space as *“A space in a building for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.”*

### Conclusion

Section R201.1 of the code makes it clear that the only definition of habitable space applicable in one- and two-family dwellings is found in the MRC. Habitable space is defined as a space in a building for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces. Section R303 of the MRC sets forth specific light, ventilation and heating requirements for habitable rooms. Section R305.1 provides the minimum ceiling height for habitable rooms. If a basement contains room or spaces meeting the requirements for habitability, an emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door would be required. Conversely, a basement designated and only containing storage, toilet, and utility spaces in accordance with R106.1.1 of the code, would not require an emergency and rescue window or exterior door.

If a basement contains a bedroom and a separate habitable space, such as a recreation room, section R310.1 of the code would require at least one emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door from each space.

When a habitable basement contains a sleeping room and a separate habitable space, one window may be provided in the sleeping room when access to the sleeping room is not subject to locking. Reliance upon an egress passageway through an adjacent bedroom subject to locking would not meet the intent of the code for egress from a room or space.

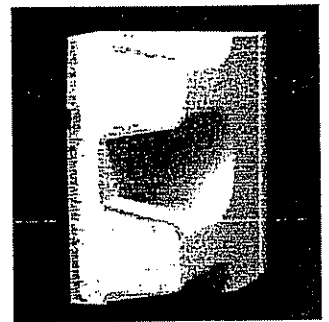
Questions regarding this technical bulletin may be directed to the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety, Building Division, P.O. Box 30254, Lansing, MI 48909 or by calling (517) 241-9317.

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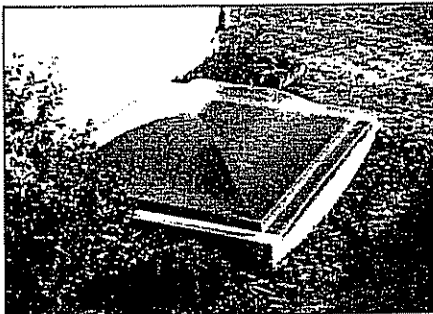


- Component System simply snaps together on site
- Terraced step design for emergency escape
- Attractive sandstone color complements basement interior and blends with any architecture
- Allows more natural light into basement
- Provides planting space for visual enhancement
- Ideal for new construction and remodeling projects
- The perfect companion to escape windows
- Satisfies basement egress codes:
  - Section 310.4 of UBC
  - Section 310.1 of CABO one and two family dwelling code
  - Section 310 of the International Residential Code 2000
- Mounting flanges attach direct to foundation and are compatible with most window bucks
- Maintenance free and UV stabilized for long life



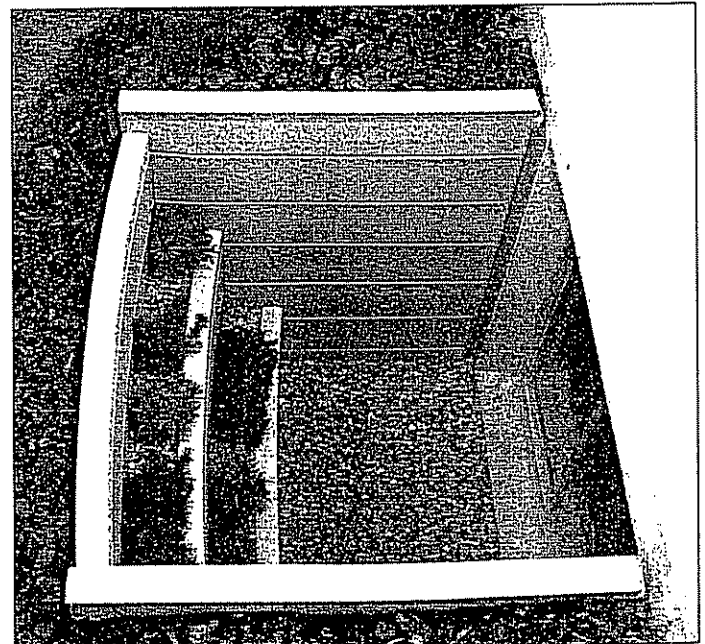
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- Clear polycarbonate dome cover (pictured)
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BASEMENTS

GRADE LEVEL BASEMENT WINDOWS NEED 5SF MINIMUM = 720 SQ. IN.

24" x 30" = MINIMUM.

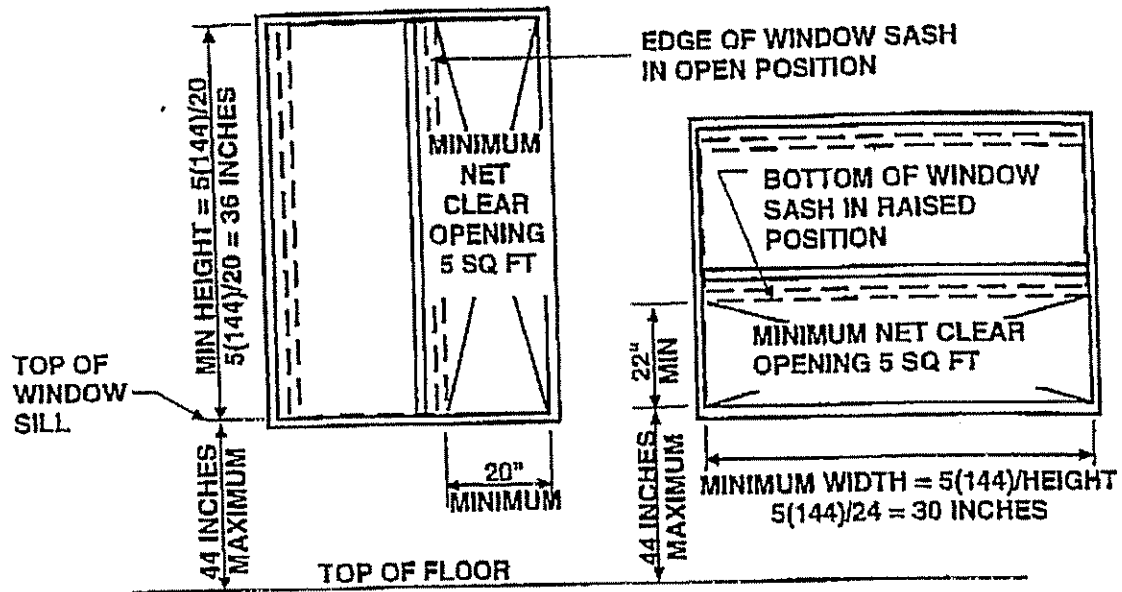


FIGURE 310.2

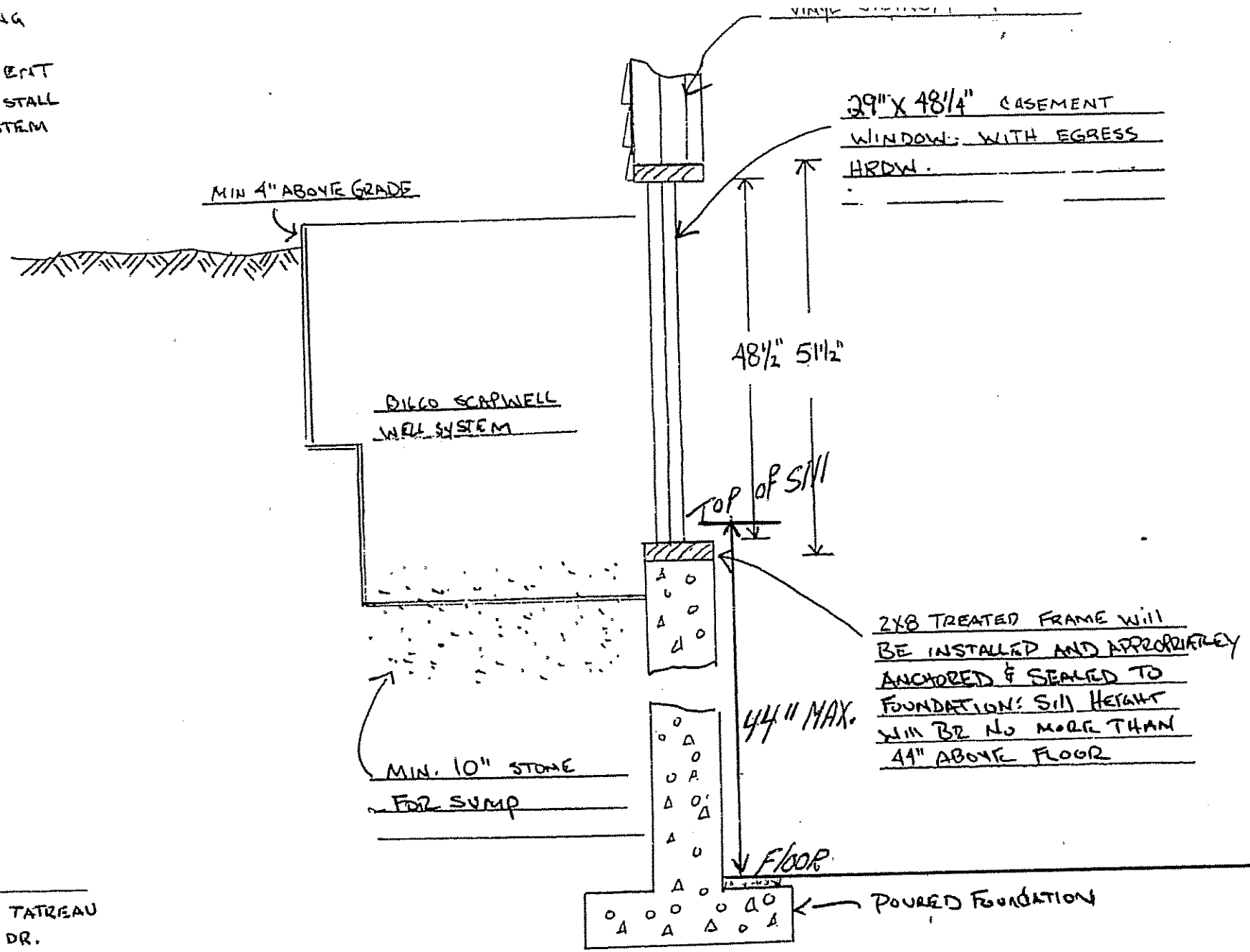
BELOW GRADE WINDOWS NEED 5.7SF = 820 SQ. IN.

24" x 36" IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

NEED 9SF ESCAPEWELL AREA = 3' x 3' MINIMUM.

CASEMENT, DOUBLEHUNG, AND SLIDERS ARE ALL ACCEPTABLE.

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 INSTALL 29"X48 1/2" CASEMENT  
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