Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

Do you know about Fairfax County’s egress rules?

According to the Virginia Maintenance Code, means of egress must be provided throughout a dwelling so that:

- A safe, continuous and unobstructed path of travel is provided from any point in the structure to the exterior.

- Stairways, hallways, and all other paths of travel must be free of belonging to provide an aisle at least 36 inches wide of clear space.

- An emergency escape and rescue opening in the form of a window or a door, which opens directly to the exterior, is required for sleeping areas.

- Emergency escape openings shall be maintained in accordance with the building code in effect at the time of building construction and include:

  - A window opening directly to the exterior of the building (Fig. 1 on back).
  
  - A window opening below grade into a window well or area (Fig. 1 & 2 on back).
  
  - A door leading directly to the exterior of the building.

  - Basement windows must have a minimum clear opening of 5.7 square feet, which is a minimum window opening 20 inches wide x 24 inches high, (Fig. 3 on back) with the opening of the window no higher than 44 inches above the basement finished floor (Fig. 4 on back).
Emergency Escape and Rescue Opening Examples:

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

To report a possible violation OR for more information contact:

Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance
12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035
Phone: 703-324-1300, TTY 711
Web: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code

To request this information in an alternate format, call the Department of Code Compliance.

This Fairfax County, Va. publication (October 2014) summarizes a few regulations. See relevant codes for specific requirements.