

SECTION 705.3.1.2.1 FIRE ESCAPE ACCESS

705.3.1.2.1 Fire escape access and details. Fire escapes shall comply with all of the following requirements:

1. Occupants shall have unobstructed access to the fire escape without having to pass through a room subject to locking.
2. Access to a new fire escape shall be through a door, except that windows shall be permitted to provide access from single dwelling units or sleeping units in Group R-1, R-2 and I-1 occupancies or to provide access from spaces having a maximum occupant load of 10 in other occupancy classifications.
 - 2.1. The window shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet or 5 square feet where located at grade.
 - 2.2. The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches and net clear opening width shall be 20 inches.
 - 2.3. The bottom of the clear opening shall not be greater than 44 inches above the floor.
 - 2.4. The operation of the window shall comply with the operational constraints of the *International Building Code*.
3. Newly constructed fire escapes shall be permitted only where exterior stairs cannot be utilized because of lot lines limiting the stair size or because of the sidewalks, alleys, or roads at grade level.
4. Openings within 10 feet (3048 mm) of fire escape stairs shall be protected by fire assemblies having minimum 3/4-hour fire-resistance ratings.

Exception: Opening protection shall not be required in buildings equipped throughout with an approved automatic sprinkler system.
5. In all buildings of Group E occupancy, up to and including the 12th grade, buildings of Group I occupancy, rooming houses and childcare centers, ladders of any type are prohibited on fire escapes used as a required means of egress.

Q: Item 3 of Section 705.3.1.2.1 does not allow the use of a fire escape if an exterior stair can be constructed. Would the construction of an exterior stair be required to comply with Section 1026 of the IBC? Would the construction of the new exterior stairway be considered an addition?

A: The exterior stairway would be required to be constructed in accordance with the IBC in accordance with Section 701.3 of the IBC. The construction of the exterior stairway would be considered an addition in accordance with Section 1002.2 of the IBC. However, the exception to this section would not require such an appendage to the building to be included in the area calculations of the building. [7-24]

Q: Section 705.3.1.2.1 identifies only construction details related to access to new fire escapes. Are there any minimum access requirements for existing fire escapes?

A: No. Existing fire escapes must comply with Section 705.2, Exception 2. The local code official must evaluate the existing conditions and require changes only if they are a distinct hazard to life safety. [7-25]