

Town of East Lyme



FAQ's

Basement Conversions One and Two-Family Dwellings

Applicant must submit a floor plan showing the location and size of all existing and proposed walls, windows and doors, and must identify the use for each space. Plan must show existing equipment, i.e. boiler, electrical panel, water meter, etc., and must show finished ceiling heights, stairway width, headroom, rise, and run.

General:

Garages shall be separated from new habitable space as required for new construction.

Basements without habitable spaces shall have a minimum ceiling height of 6'-8". Basements being converted to habitable space require a minimum ceiling height of 6'-10".

Exception: At beams, ducts or other obstructions the minimum height may be reduced to 6'-4".

Habitable rooms must have a minimum floor area of not less than 70 square feet, with a minimum horizontal dimension of at least 7 feet.

Wood in contact with concrete must be naturally durable or pressure treated.

Heat, Light & Ventilation:

All habitable rooms shall have glazing area of not less than 8 percent of the floor area. Minimum natural ventilation of not less than 4 percent of the floor area shall be provided through windows, doors, louvers or other approved openings to outdoor air.

Exceptions: Glazed areas need not open when not required for egress and a whole-house mechanical ventilation system is installed in accordance with Section M1507. Glazed areas need not be installed when the above exception is satisfied and artificial light is provided in accordance with Section R303.1(E2).

Adjoining rooms shall be considered when one-half the common wall is open providing an opening of at least one-tenth the floor area but not less than 25 square feet.

Bathrooms shall be provided with a glazing area of at least 3 square feet, one-half which must be openable.

Exception: Glazed areas are not required when artificial light and local exhaust directly to the outdoors complying with Section M1507 are installed.

All habitable spaces shall be provided with heating capable of maintaining a minimum room temperature of 68°F at a point 3 feet above the floor and 2 feet from exterior walls.

Egress:

Habitable space and sleeping rooms shall have at least one emergency escape and rescue opening (egress) that provides direct access to a public way. The sill height must not exceed 44" from the finished floor (or platform). The opening shall be a minimum of 5.7 square feet (grade floor openings may be 5 square feet), with a minimum height of 24" and a minimum width of 20". Openings shall be operational from the inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge. Replacement windows may utilize removable sashes to comply with the required opening dimensions.

Exceptions: Habitable basements without sleeping rooms provided with two remote code-compliant stairways, and existing basements being converted to habitable space without sleeping rooms are not required to have egress openings.

Egress windows where the sill height is below the adjacent grade shall have an area well with a minimum projection of 36" and net area of at least 9 square feet. Area wells greater than 44" deep shall be equipped with a permanently mounted ladder or stairs (see Section R310.2.1). Covers and grates may be installed provided they comply with the egress opening requirements and can be opened with the normal force required to open the window.

Note: These windows are not considered a hazardous location.

Required doors may not exit into a garage. For doors with a threshold below the adjacent grade any bulkhead enclosure opening must provide net clear opening 5.7 square feet.

Egress openings under decks must provide a path a minimum of 36" high.

Stairways:

Enclosed accessible spaces under stairs shall have all surfaces protected with a minimum ½" gypsum board.

Stairways shall be a minimum of 36" wide at all points above the handrail. Handrails shall not project more than 4-1/2" on either side and leave a minimum width from the handrail to the tread of 31-1/2" with one handrail, or 27" with two handrails. For spiral stairs see Section R311.5.8.

Exception: Existing stairways serving unfinished basements being converted to habitable space shall not be less than 32" wide at all points above the handrail and below the minimum headroom. Handrails shall not project more than 4" on either side and leave a minimum width from the handrail to the tread of 28" with one handrail, or 24" with two handrails.

Where a chairlift is installed, a minimum clear passage of 20" must be maintained when the unit is not in use.

The minimum stairway headroom is 6'-8", except on existing stairways serving unfinished basements being converted to habitable space the minimum headroom is 6'-6".

The maximum riser height is 8-1/4" and shall not vary within a flight by greater than 3/8".

Exception: Existing stairways serving unfinished basements being converted to habitable space may have a maximum riser height of 9".

The minimum tread depth is 9" and shall not vary within a flight by greater than 3/8".

Exceptions: Existing stairways serving unfinished basements being converted to habitable space may have a minimum tread depth of 8". Winders shall have a minimum tread depth of 9" measured at the walk line 12" from the narrowest side and be no less than 6" at any point.

Standard requirements for lighting, tread profile, risers, guards and handrails apply and may be found in Section R311.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms:

Per Section R314 and R315, when alterations requiring a permit occur the entire dwelling unit shall be provided with alarms located as required for new dwellings.

Alarms shall receive their primary power from the building wiring, with a battery backup. Wiring shall be permanent and without a disconnecting switch other than those required for overcurrent protection.

Where more than one alarm is required to be installed within an individual dwelling, the alarm devices shall be interconnected in such a manner that the actuation of one alarm will activate all of the alarms in the individual unit.

Exception: Hard-wiring and interconnection of alarms in existing areas is not required where the alterations do not result in the removal of interior wall or ceiling finishes.

Combustion Air:

Per Section G2407.5 for gas-burning equipment and/or NFPA 31 Chapter 5, for oil-burning equipment, required indoor combustion air volume must consider all appliances in the space. Standard requirement is 50 cubic feet/1,000 btu/h input is valid for spaces with an infiltration rate of at least 0.40 ACH, otherwise see appropriate code section.

When mechanically supplied combustion air is used, each piece of equipment must be connected with an interlock circuit preventing operation without combustion air.

Please review the following handouts available at our web site: www.eltownhall.com for additional requirements.

- For energy code requirements, please review "Energy Checklist"*
- For window code requirements, please review "Windows & Doors FAQ's"*

Provide a copy of new window or door specifications showing compliance with applicable structural, safety glazing, energy code, etc. requirements, as well as flashing instructions with application.

Install an approved Carbon Monoxide detector prior to commencing any construction.