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RESIDENTIAL WINDOW REPLACEMENTS

A building permit is required for the installation of windows, new or replaced. The five (5) main building and energy code items to address for a residential window installation are:

1. Light and ventilation requirements for habitable areas.
2. Sleeping room (bedroom) emergency egress requirements.
3. Windows in locations that are required to be “safety glazed” (tempered or laminate glass).
4. Exterior wall construction between windows and doors for lateral load resistance (braced walls).
5. State of California Title 24 energy compliance requirements for an alteration.

The following information is intended to clarify some of the typical residential window assembly replacement and/or new installation questions:

- A building permit is required for window assembly replacement (either “retrofit” or nail-on flange style). Replacement of “glass only” does not require a building permit.
- Existing windows that conform to the current light, ventilation, egress, etc. requirements of the 2016 California Residential Code (CRC) shall not be replaced with windows that do not comply.
- If the existing clear opening for emergency egress windows is higher than 44”, it will be allowed to remain. However, if any alterations or repairs are made to the “framed opening”, a maximum height of 44” to the bottom of the clear opening of the window frame itself is required.
- Safety glazing is required if the window glazing is located within a 24” arc of the vertical edge of a door in the closed position and the glazing bottom edge is less than 60” above the walking surface. Glass areas greater than 9 square feet, less than 18” above the floor, exposed top edge greater than 36” above the floor and within 36” of a walking surface must be safety glazing. Also, glazing in enclosures for tubs and showers within 60” of the floor and glazing adjacent to stairways, landings and ramps, pools and hot tubs as specified in the 2016 CRC shall be safety glazed.
- For dwellings of “Conventional Light-Frame Construction”, the locations of existing window or door openings are allowed to remain. However, if existing window or door openings are to be widened or if new window or door openings are proposed in the exterior wall(s), the configuration of the newly framed wall must meet the minimum braced wall requirements as noted in Section R602.10 of the 2016 CRC.
- There are two (2) minimum residential Title 24 Energy Code requirements for glazing in windows, skylights, sliding glass doors, etc. The two (2) minimum requirements are a maximum glazing U-Factor of 0.32 and a maximum Solar Heat Gain coefficient (SHGC) of 0.25.

Residential Egress Window Installation Requirements

The 2016 California Residential Code requires minimum opening dimensions and areas for bedroom windows.

1. If the bedroom in question does not have a door to the exterior, one window opening in the room shall meet the following minimum building code dimensions and areas when a new window assembly is installed.
 - a. Minimum opening width: 20 inches
 - b. Minimum opening height: 24 inches
 - c. Minimum opening area: 5.7 square feet (Width and/or height must exceed The minimum).

Exception: The minimum net clear opening may be 5 square feet for grade-floor openings.

If a "new window opening" is created in a wall of the bedroom and this window is to be used for the required egress, in addition to the minimum dimensions and areas indicated above, a maximum height of 44" above the floor level to the bottom of the clear opening of the window frame will be required.

2. If the existing window opening(s) does not meet the above minimum dimensions and areas, the new window opening(s) configuration shall be as close as possible to the above dimensions and shall not reduce the existing opening dimensions and areas.