

## Do you need a permit?

Yes. You **must** obtain a building permit for any basement development as determined by your local authority.

Building permits are required for most major construction projects, including new buildings, additions, renovations, or a change of use in any existing building.

## Benefits of getting a permit

- You have access to the expertise of certified safety codes officers (inspectors), who will help you comply with the Alberta Building Code.
- Your plans will be reviewed by a certified safety codes officer to identify potential problems. This will help you make changes in the planning stage and avoid costly corrections after construction.
- Inspections will be carried out by certified safety codes officers, who will provide you with inspection reports and followup of any outstanding deficiencies related to the Alberta Building Code.

## Basement suites

This brochure provides information about basement development for single-family homes only. It does **not** include the province-wide standards for the construction of secondary suites that are now included in the Alberta Building Code and the Alberta Fire Code.

For more information on basement suite requirements, please see the *Secondary Suites* brochure, or contact Municipal Affairs using the contact information on the back of this brochure.

## Alberta's Safety System

Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with the Safety Codes Council, municipalities, corporations, agencies, and other organizations to deliver effective community-focused public safety programs and services to Albertans.

## Questions or more information:

### Alberta Municipal Affairs

Safety Services Branch  
16th Floor, Commerce Place  
10155 - 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4  
  
Phone toll-free: 1-866-421-6929  
Fax: 780-427-8686  
E-mail: [safety.services@gov.ab.ca](mailto:safety.services@gov.ab.ca)  
[www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp\\_index.cfm](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp_index.cfm)

### Safety Codes Council

Suite 1000, 10665 Jasper Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S9  
  
Toll-free within Alberta:  
Phone: 1-888-413-0099  
Fax: 1-888-424-5134  
[www.safetycodes.ab.ca](http://www.safetycodes.ab.ca)

Please place your agency or municipality contact information in the space below.

These brochures may be updated periodically. They have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations currently in effect.

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# Safety Tips

## Finishing your basement



Government  
of Alberta ■  
Municipal Affairs



# Finishing your basement

## Required plans information

You must submit plans with your building permit application to your local authority before starting any construction. The plans should contain the following **floor plan** and **cross-section** information:

## Floor plan requirements

- Show proposed and existing rooms.
- Indicate the use and dimensions of the proposed rooms under development.
- Indicate details of any structural changes.
- Show locations of smoke alarms.
- Indicate locations, sizes and swing direction of all doors.
- Indicate window sizes and locations.

## Cross-section requirements

Cross-section details shall be provided where required by the safety codes officer and should incorporate the following:

**Insulation:** The perimeter of the foundation wall is to be insulated from the top of the wall to a minimum of 600 mm (24 inches) below the exterior finished ground level. This insulation is to have a minimum thermal resistance value of RSI 1.4 (R8).

### Foamed plastic insulation materials:

These can be dangerous when exposed to fire and must be protected by a thermal barrier (i.e. drywall).

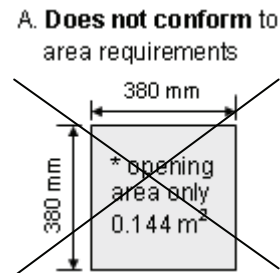
**Vapour Barrier** installed on the heated side of the insulation.

## Bedroom windows

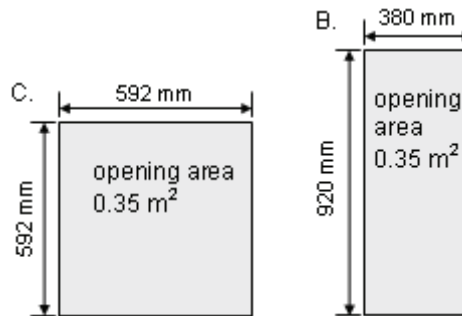
Unless a bedroom has a door that leads directly to the building exterior, or the basement is sprinklered, each bedroom must have at least one window that can be opened from the inside without the use of tools or technical knowledge.

This window must provide an unobstructed opening with a minimum area of  $0.35 \text{ m}^2$  ( $3.77 \text{ ft}^2$  or 543 square inches), and no dimension less than 380 mm (15 inches). See the drawings below for further clarification.

## Examples of conforming and non-conforming bedroom windows



The opening in example A is only  $0.144 \text{ m}^2$ , and it will not allow the average occupant to pass through the window as an alternate means of escape during a fire emergency.



Examples B and C conform to height, width and area requirements

## Window egress into window-well

If a window opens into a window-well, a clearance of at least 550 mm (about 22 inches) between the window and the wall of the window-well is required.

An awning-style window opening into a window-well may pose a challenge in maintaining this clearance, and it could interfere with the occupant's ability to exit through the window-well. The required clearances **must** be maintained when the window is in the open position.

## Gas-fired furnaces

In developed basements, gas-fired furnaces and water heaters must be enclosed in a separate room from the living space, as required in the current edition of the Alberta Building Code.

## Smoke alarms

Smoke alarms located in both the main dwelling and the basement must be installed as per the current edition of the Alberta Building Code.

They must be hard-wired into an electrical circuit and interconnected so they will all operate in unison.

## Carbon monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed in every home containing a solid-fuel-burning appliance, as required in the current edition of the Alberta Building Code. The alarms are also recommended for existing homes.