



## **Building Advisory A19-004**

August 31, 2022

### **Subject: Exterior egress requirements for single family homes**

#### **Background:**

Minimum requirements regarding a means of egress can be found in the National Building Code Alberta Edition (NBC AE) except egresses within a dwelling unit or houses with a secondary suite.

The NBC AE excludes single family homes from having to meet the prescriptive dimensional requirements for a means of egress which brings uncertainty as to what is an acceptable dimension for a means of egress. Division B Article 9.9.3.1. Application (Dimension of Means of Egress) states that it applies to every means of egress except for exits and access to exits serving dwelling units or houses with a secondary suite. These exemptions are permitted because of the low occupant load of dwelling units and houses with a secondary suite and the familiarity of occupants with their dwelling.

This advisory has been created to avoid unsafe conditions and to give applicants and Safety Codes Officers parameters to work with when reviewing exterior egress requirements for dwellings governed by Division B, Sub Section 9.10.15.

#### **NBC AE Division A Article 1.4.1.2. defines the follow terms:**

##### *Definitions:*

*Access to exit* - means that part of a means of egress within a floor area that provides access to an exit serving the floor area.

*Exit* - means that part of a means of egress, including doorways, that leads from the floor area it serves to a separate building, an open public thoroughfare, or an exterior open space protected from fire exposure from the building and having access to an open public thoroughfare. (See Note A-1.4.1.2.(1).

*Unsafe condition* - means any condition that, in the opinion of the authority having jurisdiction, could endanger the life, limb or health of any person authorized or expected to be on or about the premises.

*Means of egress* - means a continuous path of travel provided for the escape of persons from any point in a building or contained open space to a separate building, an open public thoroughfare, or an exterior open space protected from fire exposure from the building and having access to an open public thoroughfare. Means of egress includes exits and access to exits.

*Note: egress windows are not considered to be a primary means of egress as defined by Division A, Article 1.4.1.2.*

The information in this advisory may not address all conditions being proposed in an application. For conditions other than the ones listed here, consultation with a Safety Codes Officer is recommended to determine what is an acceptable solution for a consistent approach in the review of these situations.

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## Advisory:

### 1. Single dwelling unit primary or secondary suite entrance door.

The minimum clear egress width (no obstructions\*) for a primary or secondary entrance and exit door being for a single dwelling unit or single family home with a secondary suite into a side setback is 860mm measured between the building face and property line, adjacent fence or structure. This dimension has been derived from the dimensional requirements in the 2019 NBC AE for a single dwelling unit for hallway width, stair width and length of landing.

2019 NBC AE References: Division B Sentences 9.5.4.1.(1) Hallway Width, 9.8.2.1.(2) Stair Width and 9.8.6.3.(4) Dimensions of Landings.

\*No obstructions such as cantilevers or fences shall restrict the width of the side yard egress to less than 860mm where entrance doors are located in a side yard unless an alternative unobstructed means of egress is provided.

See Example 1 - on the following page.

### 2. Single dwelling unit egress window(s).

The minimum clear egress width (\*\*no obstructions) of an egress window into a side setback is 760mm between the building face and property line, adjacent fence or other structure.

This dimension has been derived from the 2019 NBC AE minimum window well clearance requirement.

2019 AE References: Division B 9.9.10.1.(3), A-9.9.10.1.(3).

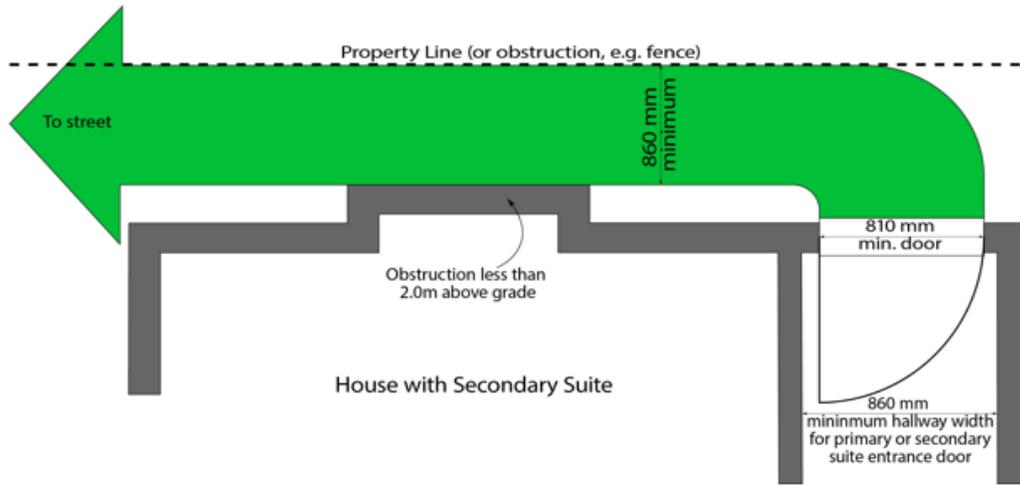
\*\*No obstructions such as cantilevers or fences shall restrict the width of the side yard egress to less than 550mm where only a window discharges into the side yard unless an alternative unobstructed means of egress is provided.

*Note: The 550mm minimum dimension has been derived from the 2006 Alberta Building Code minimum window well dimension, this number has been used as it will allow for tolerance of a fence opposite a 600mm cantilever which we commonly see as a design dimension on single family homes.*

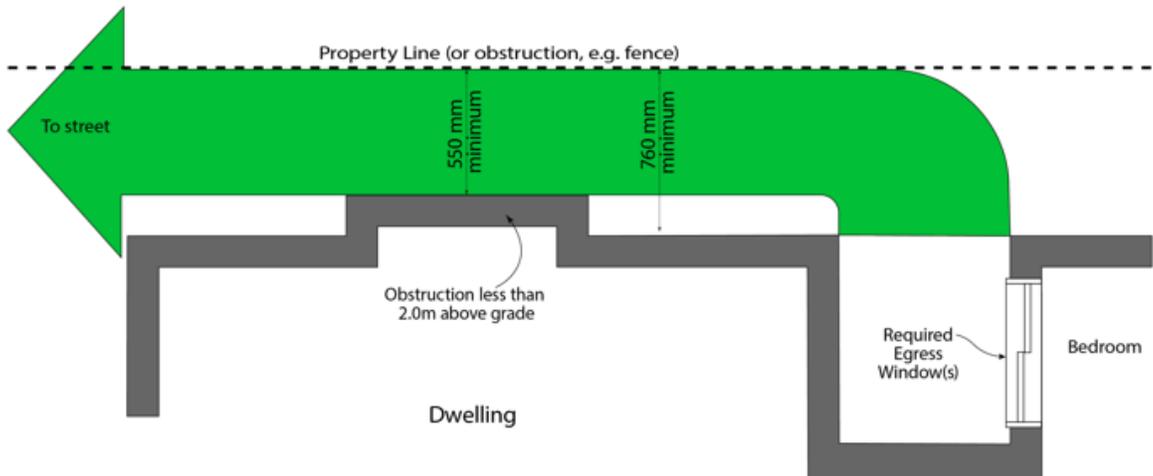
*Note: a window is not permitted in an exposed building face when the limiting distance is less than 1.2m. This point specifically relates to a situation where an egress window may discharge into a recess/alcove which then leads to an area with a reduced side yard clearance. This specified minimum clearance (760mm) is consistent with the minimum required width for means of egress from a floor area (see Article 9.9.5.5.) and the minimum required width for path of travel on exit stairs (see Article 9.9.6.1.).*

See Example 2 – on the following page.

### Example 1



### Example 2



This interpretation was accepted by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC - August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022).

Chief Building Official  
Calgary Building Services  
Planning & Development

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