



Policy Statement

Hopkins Fire Prevention Bureau

Date: 10/25/84 (revised 11-12)

Subject: Fire Protection in windowless stories and basements

Basement fires are considered the most deadly for firefighters. Crawling down the stairway is like entering a chimney. The codes have recognized this fact for many years and have provided us with requirements not only to protect new construction, but also to correct existing hazards.

If any portion of the basement is located more than 75 ft. from the required openings, the basements shall be provided with an approved automatic sprinkler system throughout.

Exceptions

The following exceptions may be considered if the owner submits a written request to the fire department:

paneling and non-structural walls. A sign shall be posted in the area stating that the area must remain clear of combustible storage or use. Service equipment for the building may remain if protected by automatic sprinkler protection having an approved domestic water supply.

- Completely vacate the entire basement or story of all combustibles such as storage, use,
- If the basement or story is 3000 sq. ft. or less in area, it may be divided into two areas. The dividing wall is to meet the requirements of a horizontal exit (1 hr. rated wall with 1 hr. opening protection) each area is to be no larger than 1500 sq. ft. in area and is to have a minimum of two exits from the area. (One exit may be through the 1 hr. separation wall). The structural elements located in the basement or stories are to have a minimum of 1 hr. fire protection.
- Windows meeting the fire code requirements may be installed or maintained below grade level if the following conditions are satisfied:
 1. Size of window well or trench is 4 ft. minimum from wall, 6 ft. wide minimum centered on window. The sides are to be banked at 45 or are to have retaining walls and steps.
 2. Walls are to have adequate water drainage and be maintained clear of snow, ice and debris.

If one of the above exceptions are approved and implemented, it shall be the responsibility of the building owner to maintain their integrity. If an owner is unable to do this, the exception shall be revoked and the required fire sprinkler system installed.