



# BASIC

## Health and Safety Requirements

**Location on lot**  
**Natural light**  
**Ventilation**  
**Ceiling height**  
**Kitchens**  
**Bathrooms**  
**Room dimensions**  
**Exits**  
**Stairways**  
**Separation**  
**Heat source**  
**Smoke detectors**

**FOR**

**RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

All too often when someone is remodeling or repairing their house, the work they do or portions of it do not reflect the minimum requirements for health and safety. Sometimes it is an oversight on the part of the building department or contractor, and sometimes it is just the lack of knowledge or understanding by the homeowner. Correcting the condition can often be more costly than doing it right in the first place.

To help inform the consumer, All About Homes has developed the following information outlining the very basic requirements of the current International Building Code published by the International Code Council. These codes have evolved over the past 75 years and today represent one of the most sophisticated set of standards for creating safe and affordable housing. They are uniform and apply to all types of structures so that all may benefit. So before you begin any remodeling or repair projects in your house, know the basics, they will be important for the success of your project.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

For additional information on this subject or any work you are considering, you can consult with the currently adopted building code enforce by your local building department, or contact: All About Homes at (510) 537-6000 or visit our website at: [www.allabouthomes.com](http://www.allabouthomes.com)

### **LOCATION ON LOT:**

Any exterior wall having windows or other openings must be at least 3 feet from the property line. Other walls may be less that 3 feet, but must have at least one-hour fire resistive construction. (Local zoning ordinances may be more restrictive requiring further setbacks.) The setback requirements are important to reduce the potential spread of fire and to allow access for emergency personnel.

### **LIGHT AND VENTILATION:**

All habitable rooms must be provided with natural light equal to at least 10% of the floor area. For example, a 10' x 12' room would have 120 square feet of floor area, and would have a minimum window size of 12 square feet (10% of 120 = 12) for natural light.

All habitable rooms must also be provided with natural ventilation equal to at least 5% of the floor area. A 120 square foot room would require a minimum window opening of 6 square feet (5% of 120 = 6) to meet the requirements for natural ventilation. If the required ventilation cannot be achieved, then mechanical ventilation should provide 2 air changes per hour.

Exceptions:

Required openings for light and ventilation may open into a roofed porch or covered patio area provided the covered porch or area:

- 1) Abuts a street, yard or court.
- 2) Has a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet.
- 3) Has the longer side and one additional side being 65% open and unobstructed.

### **CEILING HEIGHT:**

Ceilings must not be less than 7 feet 6 inches except; kitchens, halls, bathrooms, and toilet compartments, which may have a height of 7 feet measured to the lowest projection of the ceiling (for example to the bottom of a light fixture, or a ceiling fan).

### **KITCHENS:**

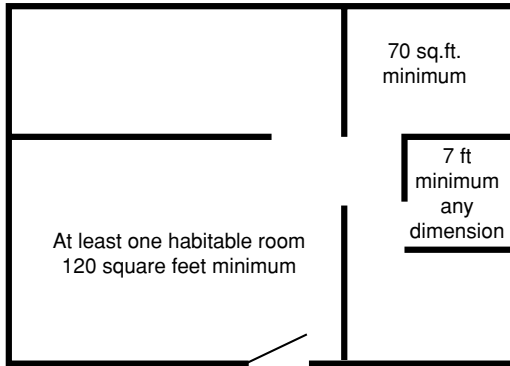
Each dwelling unit is to be provided with a kitchen area equipped with a kitchen sink and hot and cold running water.

## BATHROOMS:

Each dwelling unit is to be provided with a bathroom consisting of a toilet, sink and either a bathtub or shower and hot and cold running water. Toilets shall be located in a space not less than 30 inches in width with a minimum clearance of 24 inches in front of it.

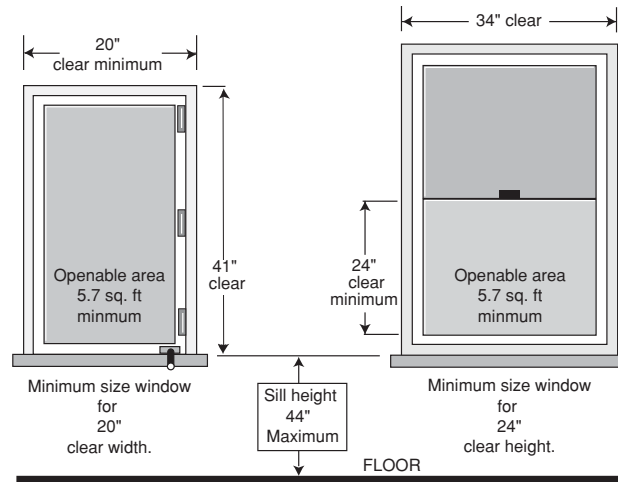
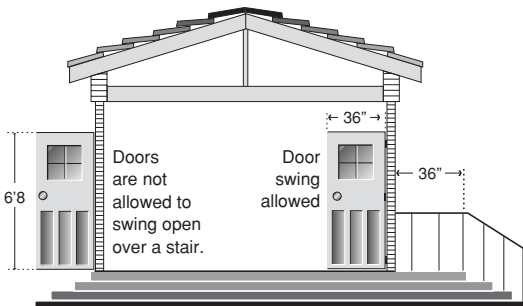
## ROOM DIMENSIONS:

Every dwelling unit must have at least one room, which is not less than 120 sq. feet. Habitable rooms other than kitchens shall have at least 70 sq. feet (7x10). The widths of these rooms cannot be less than seven feet.



## EXITS:

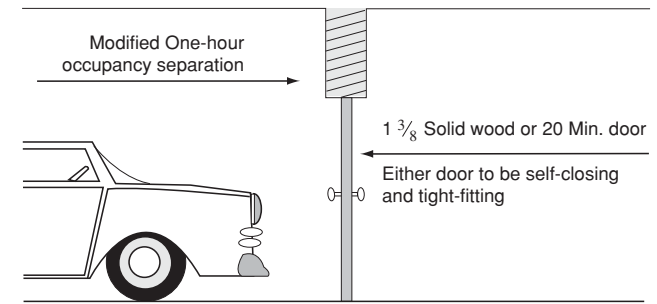
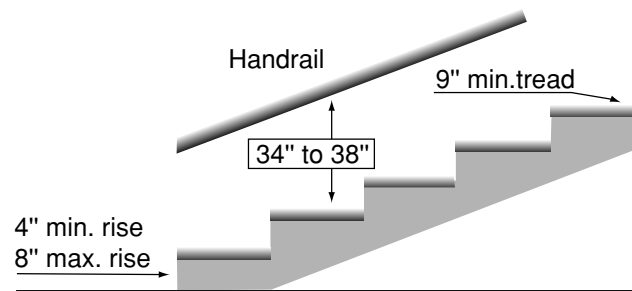
Each dwelling must have at least one exterior doorway with an opening of 36 inches wide, and a height of 6 feet, 8 inches. The door may not swing open over a step. Landings serving the doors must be level with the threshold of the door and be as wide as the door opening with a length of 36 inches in the direction of travel. This is to ensure the safe entrance and exiting of a building during an emergency.



Every sleeping room shall have at least one emergency exit (door or window), which has an opening of at least 5.7 square feet. (Minimum window openings are not less than 20 inches wide and 24 inches tall). The window sill height cannot be more than 44 inches above the floor. This requirement is to ensure that the occupants can easily reach the window and exit the room in the event of a fire or earthquake.

## STAIRWAYS:

All stairways of more than three steps must have at least one handrail. The handrails must be placed on the open sides of the stairway. Also, the handrails must project at least 1½ inches from the wall, and be placed between 34 and 38 inches above the top of the stair tread so it can be easily grasped. The handgrip portion of the handrail shall not be less than 1¼ inches or more than 2 inches in cross sectional dimension. The maximum rise of each step cannot exceed 8 inches, and the depth of the stair tread must be at least 9 inches. Headroom clearances for the stairway must be 6 feet 8 inches.



## SEPARATION:

The wall between the house and garage is required to be provided with a fire protective covering of 5/8 inch sheetrock. The door between the house and the garage is required to be solid core (1¾ inches), and self-closing. This will allow a fire to burn for a minimum of 20 minutes before entering the house. There shall be no doors between a garage and any room used for sleeping purposes. This protects the inhabitants from the spread of fire and lethal fumes from autos.

## HEAT SOURCE:

Dwelling units shall be provided with a permanently installed heat source capable of maintaining a room temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit at a point 3 feet above the floor in all habitable rooms.

## SMOKE DETECTORS:

Smoke detectors shall be installed in each sleeping room, and centrally located in the corridor or area giving access to each separate sleeping area. All detectors shall be installed in accordance with approved manufacturer's instruction.



24326 Mission Blvd., Suite 7 Hayward, CA 94544  
Tel: (510) 537-6000 Fax: (510) 537-8666

or visit our website: [www.allabouthomes.com](http://www.allabouthomes.com)

No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior written permission from All About Homes, Inc.