



New Castle County Government Center  
87 Reads Way  
New Castle, DE 19720  
Department of Land Use - Building Inspections

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Date: **August 12, 2010**  
Subject: **Emergency escape window obstructions**  
References: **2006 International Residential Code**

This Staff Code Interpretation is intended to be used to clarify Sections R310.2 (Window Wells) and R310.5 (Emergency escape windows under decks and porches) in the above referenced Code Edition.

Below is the exact text from the sections of the 2006 International Residential Code in question.

***Section R310.2, Window Wells. The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 square feet, with a minimum horizontal projection and with of 36 inches. The area of the window well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened.***

***Section R310.5, Emergency escape windows under decks and porches. Emergency escape windows are allowed to be installed under decks and porches provided the location of the deck allows the emergency escape window to be fully opened and provides a path not less than 36 inches in height to a yard or court.***

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**Question:** Would a window well installed under a fireplace projection be allowed when there is only 21 inches of clearance above the well? The projection covers half of the well and projects approximately 24 inches away from the house.

**Answer:** No. The required 36 inch minimum horizontal projection of the well must be measured from the 24 inch projection of the fireplace. i.e.  $36'' + 24'' = 60''$  window well projection from the wall.

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**Code Updates:** While this section was reorganized with the adoption of the 2015 IRC, this code interpretation is unaffected by the changes.

George O. Haggerty  
Code Official

**STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION**