

NEW BRUNSWICK BASEMENTS

Egress Windows & Safety

Egress window requirements, window well installation, emergency escape compliance, natural light, and ventilation for basement bedrooms

13 Expert Answers from Basement IQ

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How do I flash and seal an egress window installation in a poured concrete foundation in Saint John to prevent water infiltration around the new frame?

Proper flashing and sealing of an egress window in Saint John's clay soil conditions requires a multi-layer waterproofing approach, starting with exterior membrane flashing tied into the foundation waterproofing system, followed by interior sealant application and proper window well drainage.

The key to preventing water infiltration around your new egress window is understanding that Saint John's heavy clay soils hold water against foundations much longer than sandy soils. This creates sustained hydrostatic pressure that will find any weakness in your waterproofing assembly. The flashing system must work as an integrated unit, not just individual components.

Exterior Flashing Assembly

Start with the rough opening preparation. The concrete cut must be clean and square — any jagged edges or debris will compromise your seal. Apply a liquid membrane (like Blueskin or similar) that extends 6 inches beyond the rough opening on all sides, tying into any existing foundation waterproofing. This creates your primary water barrier.

Install the window using a quality sealant like Tremco Spectrem 1 or Dow 795 structural glazing sealant around the entire frame perimeter. These polyurethane sealants remain flexible through Saint John's freeze-thaw cycles and maintain adhesion to both concrete and window frame materials. Apply a continuous bead with no gaps — water will find even pin-hole openings.

The critical detail is the sill flashing. Install a sloped metal flashing (aluminum or galvanized steel) that extends under the window sill and projects out over the window well wall. This flashing must have an upturned back leg that goes behind the window frame and a drip edge that directs water away from the foundation. Seal all flashing penetrations with butyl tape or compatible sealant.

Window Well Waterproofing

Your window well becomes part of the waterproofing system. Install a waterproof membrane on the well walls, tied into the window flashing system. The well must have positive drainage — either connected to your foundation drainage system or with its own drain to daylight. In Saint John's clay soils, window wells without proper drainage become swimming pools during spring thaw.

Install a minimum 6-inch gravel base in the well for drainage, covered with landscape fabric to prevent soil migration. The well cover should be sloped away from the window and sealed to the well walls to prevent surface water entry.

Interior Backup Measures

Even with perfect exterior flashing, install an interior sealant bead where the window frame meets the concrete. Use a high-quality polyurethane sealant that can handle minor movement. This serves as your backup if the exterior seal develops any issues over time.

Consider installing a small interior drain at the window sill level, connected to your basement drainage system. This provides an escape route for any water that might penetrate the exterior assembly during extreme weather events.

Professional Installation Recommendation

While experienced DIYers can handle the sealing work, the concrete cutting and structural aspects of egress window installation require professional expertise. The window opening must maintain the foundation's structural integrity, and improper cutting can create stress concentrations that lead to cracking. Additionally, egress windows require building permits and inspections in Saint John — the installation must meet NB Building Code requirements for emergency egress.

Need help finding a qualified contractor for egress window installation? New Brunswick Basements can match you with experienced basement contractors who understand Saint John's soil conditions and proper waterproofing techniques for egress windows.

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Q2

What are the New Brunswick building code requirements for egress window size and sill height in a finished basement bedroom?

Every finished basement bedroom in New Brunswick must have an egress window with a minimum unobstructed opening of 3.8 square feet (0.35 square metres) and a maximum sill height of 1,500 millimetres from the finished floor. This is a life-safety requirement under the NB Building Code — there are no exceptions, no variances, and no workarounds. If your basement bedroom does not have a compliant egress

window, it cannot legally be called a bedroom, and it will not pass a building inspection.

The **3.8 square foot minimum opening** refers to the clear, unobstructed area when the window is fully open — not the size of the glass or the rough opening in the wall. This is an important distinction because many windows have frames, hardware, and opening mechanisms that reduce the actual clear opening below what the glass size suggests. A window that appears large enough when closed may not meet egress requirements when opened.

Caseament windows (hinged on one side, swinging outward) are the most popular choice for basement egress because they provide the largest clear opening relative to their frame size. A standard **24-inch by 36-inch casement window** typically meets the 3.8 square foot requirement, but you must verify the manufacturer's specifications for clear opening area.

The **1,500 mm maximum sill height** (approximately 59 inches or just under 5 feet) is measured from the finished floor surface to the bottom of the window opening. In many older NB basements with shorter ceiling heights, this is relatively easy to achieve because the windows are already close to the top of the foundation wall. However, in homes where the basement floor has been lowered through **underpinning**, or where the existing windows sit unusually high on the wall, meeting the sill height requirement may require lowering the rough opening — which means cutting into the foundation wall.

Beyond the opening size and sill height, the NB Building Code also requires that the **egress window must be operable from the inside without tools, keys, or special knowledge**. A person unfamiliar with the window must be able to open it in an emergency. This eliminates any window that requires a special latch sequence or a key to unlock.

Permit and Inspection Process

Installing an egress window in a NB basement requires a **building permit**. In Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John, the city building department processes permits in **1 to 3 weeks**. In rural areas served by Regional Service Commissions, expect **2 to 5 weeks**. Permit fees run **\$75 to \$300** depending on the municipality and scope of work.

The inspector will verify the **clear opening measurement**, the **sill height**, that the window operates freely, and that any **window well** (required when the window is below grade) has proper drainage and does not obstruct the opening. If you are finishing a basement bedroom and the egress window does not meet code, you will not receive a final occupancy inspection approval.

Installation of a new egress window involves **cutting the concrete or block foundation wall** with a concrete saw, which is structural work requiring professional installation. Budget **\$2,500 to \$5,000 per egress window** in the NB market, including the window, foundation cutting, window well, backfill, and waterproofing around the new opening. This is not a DIY project — it involves structural modification to your foundation and must be done correctly to maintain waterproofing integrity, especially given NB's high water tables and spring thaw conditions.

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Q3

How much does it cost to cut a concrete foundation wall and install an egress window in a Moncton basement?

Installing an egress window in a Moncton basement typically costs \$2,500 to \$5,000 per window, including cutting the concrete foundation, the window unit, the window well, drainage, and waterproofing. The final cost depends on the foundation type, the size of the opening, soil conditions, and whether you are enlarging an existing window or creating a completely new opening.

The process involves several distinct steps, each contributing to the total cost. **Concrete cutting** is the most labour-intensive portion — a concrete saw cuts the outline of the new opening through 8 to 10 inches of poured concrete (or through concrete block, which is common in Moncton homes built in the 1960s through 1980s). Cutting a new opening in a poured concrete wall runs **\$800 to \$1,500** for the cutting alone. Concrete block walls are somewhat easier to cut but require more careful finishing and a new structural lintel above the opening. If you are enlarging an existing small window, the cost is less because part of the opening already exists.

The **egress window unit** itself costs **\$400 to \$1,200** depending on size, style, and energy rating. Casement-style windows are the most popular for egress because they provide the largest clear opening. In Moncton's climate, you want a **double-pane or triple-pane window with a minimum Energy Star rating** — basement windows are below grade and exposed to cold soil temperatures, so a poorly insulated window creates significant heat loss and condensation problems through NB's long winters.

The **window well** is required whenever the egress window sits below the exterior grade level, which is almost always the case in a basement. A galvanized steel or high-density polyethylene well costs **\$200 to \$600** for the unit, plus installation. The well must be large enough to allow a person to climb out (minimum 21.5 inches of clearance from the window to the well wall) and must have **proper drainage** at the bottom — either a gravel bed draining to the weeping tile system, or a small dedicated drain pipe. Without drainage, the well fills with water during

rain and snowmelt, creating hydrostatic pressure against the new window and potentially flooding through the opening.

Moncton-Specific Cost Factors

Moncton's **sandy and silty soils** actually work in your favour for egress window installation compared to other NB cities. Sandy soil is easier to excavate for the window well than Saint John's heavy clay, and it drains more naturally. However, Moncton's sandy soils can also **shift under foundations**, so the contractor must ensure the new opening does not compromise the structural integrity of the wall — particularly if the home has any existing settlement cracks. A **structural lintel** (steel or concrete) above the opening is required to carry the load from above, adding **\$200 to \$500** to the project.

The **waterproofing around the new opening** is critical and often underestimated in cost estimates. The contractor must apply a waterproofing membrane around the entire perimeter of the new window, tie it into any existing exterior waterproofing (if present — many older Moncton homes have none), and ensure the window flashing directs water away from the opening. Budget **\$300 to \$600** for proper waterproofing at the opening. Skipping this step in NB's wet climate is a guaranteed leak within the first spring thaw.

A building permit is required in Moncton for egress window installation, typically costing **\$75 to \$200** with a processing time of **1 to 3 weeks**. The best time to schedule this work is **May through October** when the ground is unfrozen and exterior excavation is straightforward. Get at least three quotes — NB pricing varies 30-40% between contractors for identical scope. New Brunswick Basements can match you with experienced local contractors for free estimates.

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What is the minimum opening size required for a basement egress window in New Brunswick and how is it measured?

The minimum unobstructed opening size for a basement egress window in New Brunswick is **3.8 square feet (0.35 square metres)**, and it is measured as the **clear, free area available when the window is fully open** — **not the glass size, not the frame size, and not the rough opening in the wall**. This measurement determines whether an adult can physically escape through the window in a fire or emergency, which is why the code is strict and specific.

The **clear opening** is the space you could actually fit through with the window fully opened. For a **casement window** (which swings outward on a hinge), the clear opening is essentially the full frame opening minus any hardware or obstructions. For a **sliding window**, the clear opening is only the portion that slides open — typically half the total window area. For an **awning window** (hinged at the top, swinging outward from the bottom), the clear opening is the gap created at the bottom when fully extended. This is why **casement windows are the preferred choice** for basement egress — they provide the maximum clear opening relative to the overall window size.

To measure whether your existing window meets the requirement, open the window fully and measure the **width and height of the unobstructed opening** in metres or inches. Multiply width by height to get the area. For example, a window that opens to a clear space of **24 inches wide by 24 inches tall** gives you 576 square inches, which is **4.0 square feet** — this passes. A window that opens to **20 inches by 24 inches** gives 480 square inches or **3.33 square feet** — this fails. Many homeowners are surprised to find that their existing basement windows, even large-looking ones, do not meet egress requirements when actually measured in the open position.

Beyond the area requirement, the NB Building Code also requires a **maximum sill height of 1,500 mm** (approximately 59 inches) from the finished floor to the bottom of the window opening. This ensures a person can reach and climb through the window without a ladder. If your basement has been finished with a raised subfloor (like Dricore panels), the sill height is measured from the **top of the finished floor**, not the concrete slab — which means a raised floor effectively reduces your available sill height. Measure carefully before finalizing your floor assembly.

The window must also be **operable from the inside without tools, keys, or special knowledge**. A child or a disoriented person in a smoke-filled room must be able to open the window. Any locking mechanism must release with a simple, intuitive motion.

If your existing basement window does not meet the **3.8 square foot clear opening**, you have two options: **enlarge the existing opening** in the foundation wall, or **cut a new, larger opening** in a different location. Both involve cutting concrete, installing a structural lintel, adding a window well with drainage, and waterproofing the

perimeter. In the NB market, this runs **\$2,500 to \$5,000 per window** installed.

When shopping for egress windows, always check the manufacturer's specification sheet for the **clear opening area** — it will be listed separately from the overall frame dimensions. Do not assume a window meets egress requirements based on the frame size alone. Your building inspector in Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, or your Regional Service Commission will measure the actual clear opening during inspection, and if it falls short, the installation fails regardless of what the window looked like on paper.

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Q5

Do I need a window well and cover for an egress window installation in my Fredericton basement?

Yes, you almost certainly need a window well for an egress window in your Fredericton basement — any time the bottom of the egress window sits below the exterior ground level, a window well is required to provide a clear escape path. A window well cover, while not always code-mandated, is strongly recommended in Fredericton for safety, drainage management, and to prevent debris accumulation.

The **window well** is a retaining structure (typically galvanized steel, high-density polyethylene, or concrete) installed around the exterior of the egress window, holding back the soil and creating an open space in front of the window. Since basement windows in Fredericton homes are almost always below grade — with the surrounding soil level higher than the bottom of the window — a well is necessary for two reasons. First, it creates the **clear escape path** required by the NB Building Code. Second, it prevents soil, water, and debris from pressing directly against the window glass.

The NB Building Code requires that the window well provide a minimum of **21.5 inches (550 mm) of clearance** from the window to the far wall of the well, giving a person enough room to climb out. The well must also extend from the bottom of the window down to **at least 6 inches below the window sill** to prevent water from pooling at

the window level. If the well is deeper than **44 inches (1,100 mm)** from the ground surface to the bottom, a **permanently attached ladder or steps** must be installed inside the well to allow a person to climb out.

Drainage Is Critical in Fredericton

The bottom of the window well must have **proper drainage** — this is not optional in Fredericton's climate. Fredericton sits in the **Saint John River valley** with mixed clay and loam soils that hold water, and the area experiences significant spring runoff from March through May. A window well without drainage becomes a swimming pool during spring thaw, and that water will enter your basement through or around the new egress window.

The standard approach is a **12-inch gravel bed** at the bottom of the well, connected to the home's **weeping tile system** or a dedicated drain pipe leading to the sump pit. The gravel allows water to percolate down and away from the window rather than pooling against it. In older Fredericton homes (pre-1990s) that may have **no functioning weeping tile**, you may need to install a dedicated drain line from the well to an interior sump pump — adding **\$500 to \$1,500** to the project.

Window Well Covers

A **window well cover** is a clear polycarbonate or metal grate that sits over the top of the well. While not always explicitly required by code, covers are **highly recommended** in Fredericton for several practical reasons. They keep out **rain, snow, leaves, and debris** that would otherwise fill the well and clog the drainage. They prevent **children and pets from falling** into a deep well. And during Fredericton's heavy snowfalls, they keep the well clear so the egress window remains accessible in an emergency.

However, the cover **must not require tools or keys to open from the inside**. A person escaping through the egress window must be able to push the cover open. Covers that are bolted, locked, or too heavy to push open violate the egress requirement and will fail inspection. Choose a cover designed specifically for egress windows — they are hinged or lightweight enough to push open from below.

Budget **\$200 to \$600** for the window well unit itself, plus **\$100 to \$300** for a quality egress-rated cover. The well installation is included in the overall egress window installation cost of **\$2,500 to \$5,000** in the NB market. A building permit is required in Fredericton, and the inspector will check well dimensions, drainage, and cover accessibility during the final inspection. Get matched with experienced egress window contractors through New Brunswick Basements for free estimates.

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Q6

How do you ensure proper drainage in a basement egress window well in Saint John where the soil is heavy clay?

Proper drainage in a Saint John egress window well requires a dedicated drainage system that accounts for the area's notoriously heavy clay soils, which hold water against foundations and drain extremely slowly on their own. Without deliberate drainage engineering, a window well in Saint John clay becomes a bathtub that channels water directly through your egress window and into your basement.

The key to success in clay soil is connecting the window well drain to your interior or exterior drainage system rather than relying on the soil to absorb water naturally. Start with excavation well beyond the window well footprint — at least 300mm wider and 300mm deeper than the well itself. Remove all clay from the excavation zone and replace it entirely with **clear crushed stone (19mm or 3/4-inch clean stone, no fines)**. Clay backfill around a window well defeats the entire purpose of drainage.

At the base of the window well, install a **4-inch perforated drain pipe** bedded in clear stone and wrapped in filter fabric to prevent clay sediment from clogging it over time. This drain pipe must connect to either your interior weeping tile system, your sump pump pit, or daylight to a downhill grade — never leave it as a dead-end soak-away pit, because Saint John clay will not absorb the water fast enough during heavy rain or spring thaw. The drain connection is the single most critical detail that separates a functioning well from a flooding one.

Fill the window well with **minimum 200mm (8 inches) of clear crushed stone** at the bottom, grading upward. The well liner itself should be a galvanized steel or heavy-duty polyethylene well with drainage holes near the base. Wrap the exterior of the well liner in filter fabric where it contacts the surrounding soil to keep clay particles from migrating into the stone bed.

Surface Water Management

Saint John's clay soils compound the problem because surface water runs off rather than soaking in, concentrating flow toward low points — and window wells below grade are exactly that. Ensure the **finish grade around the window well slopes away from the house at a minimum 5% slope for the first 2 metres**. Install a window well cover (clear polycarbonate dome type) to keep direct rainfall and snow out of the well while still allowing light and

emergency egress. The cover should be hinged or easily removable from inside — a bolted-down cover defeats the life-safety purpose of an egress window.

During spring thaw in Saint John, frozen clay creates an impermeable layer that funnels snowmelt directly along foundation walls. If your window well drainage connects to a sump pump, confirm the pump has a **battery backup system** (\$500-\$1,000 installed) to handle power outages during March and April storms.

For installation in Saint John's clay, budget **\$3,500-\$6,000 per egress window** including proper drainage engineering — roughly \$500-\$1,000 more than installations in sandier soil areas like Moncton, because of the extra excavation, stone backfill, and drain pipe connection work required. This is not a place to cut costs. A poorly drained window well in clay soil will leak within the first spring thaw and can undermine finishing work in the bedroom below. Always hire an experienced basement contractor who understands Saint John's soil conditions and can connect the well drain to your overall waterproofing system.

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Can I convert an existing small basement window to a code-compliant egress window in my Moncton home?

Yes, converting an existing small basement window to a code-compliant egress window is one of the most common basement renovation projects in Moncton, and it is often more affordable than cutting an entirely new opening because part of the foundation has already been penetrated. That said, the existing opening almost certainly needs to be enlarged significantly to meet NB Building Code requirements.

The NB Building Code requires every basement bedroom to have an **egress window with a minimum clear opening of 3.8 square feet (0.35 m²)**, and the **sill height cannot exceed 1500mm from the finished floor**. Most older Moncton homes built in the 1960s through 1990s have small basement windows — typically 30 by 16 inches or similar — that fall well short of this requirement. A code-compliant egress window usually needs to be around 48 inches wide by 36 inches tall or a similar combination that meets the 3.8 square foot minimum.

Converting the existing window involves cutting the foundation wall to enlarge the opening. In Moncton, most homes from the 1970s onward have **poured concrete foundations**, which respond well to concrete cutting with a diamond-blade wall saw. Older concrete block foundations require more careful work to avoid destabilizing the surrounding blocks. Either way, a **steel lintel** must be installed above the enlarged opening to carry the load that the removed foundation section was supporting. This is structural work that requires a building permit and proper engineering.

The process typically involves removing the existing window, marking and cutting the enlarged opening with a concrete saw, installing the steel lintel, setting the new egress window and frame, waterproofing around the exterior, and installing a **window well with proper drainage**. In Moncton's sandy and silty soils, drainage around the well is generally easier than in clay-heavy areas like Saint John, but a layer of clear crushed stone and a drain connection are still essential to handle spring snowmelt.

Expect to pay \$2,500-\$5,000 for a complete conversion including the window, cutting, lintel, well, and waterproofing. The lower end applies when the existing opening is already close to the required size and the foundation is poured concrete. The higher end covers situations where the opening needs major enlargement, the foundation is concrete block, or the well requires significant excavation and drainage work.

A building permit is required in Moncton for this work — the city's building inspection department typically processes permits within 1-3 weeks, and you will need a framing/structural inspection after the lintel is installed and a final inspection when complete. Do not skip the permit. If you finish a basement bedroom without a code-compliant egress window and proper permits, it cannot legally be called a bedroom, which affects your home's resale value and creates a life-safety hazard.

This is strictly a professional job — cutting a foundation wall requires a diamond-blade concrete saw, structural knowledge for the lintel sizing, and proper waterproofing around the new penetration. Get at least three quotes from local basement contractors, as pricing in Moncton varies 30-40% between contractors for the same scope of work.

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Q8

What type of egress window is best for a New Brunswick basement considering our cold winters and potential for snow buildup?

A **casement-style egress window with an inward or outward swing is the best choice for New Brunswick basements**, offering the largest clear opening relative to the frame size and the best performance against NB's cold winters and snow conditions. However, the specific swing direction and window well cover design matter just as much as the window type itself in our Maritime climate.

Casement egress windows (hinged on one side, opening outward or inward) provide the full frame area as usable escape opening, which means you can meet the 3.8 square foot minimum code requirement with a smaller rough opening in the foundation. This is important because cutting less foundation wall means less structural impact and lower cost. An **inward-swinging casement** has a distinct advantage in NB — snow and ice buildup in the window well cannot block the window from opening, since it swings into the basement. Outward-swinging casements can be blocked by compacted snow or ice in the well, which is a real concern during January through March when snow accumulates.

The alternative is a **sliding egress window**, which slides horizontally and is never blocked by snow. However, sliding windows only provide 50% of the frame as clear opening, meaning you need a much larger window (and therefore a larger foundation cut) to meet the same 3.8 square foot code minimum. This drives up installation costs and creates a bigger structural consideration.

Cold-Weather Performance

For NB's winters — where temperatures regularly drop to -20°C and below in Fredericton, Edmundston, and Bathurst — the thermal performance of the window itself is critical. Choose a **double-pane (minimum) or triple-pane egress window with Low-E coating and argon gas fill**. Triple-pane is worth the investment in NB, typically adding \$200-\$400 to the window cost but dramatically reducing heat loss and condensation on the interior glass surface. A cold, single-pane or low-quality double-pane window in a basement bedroom will form heavy condensation and even frost, promoting mold on the surrounding framing and drywall.

Look for windows with a **PVC or fiberglass frame** rather than aluminum. Aluminum frames conduct cold directly through the frame, creating a thermal bridge that causes condensation and ice buildup on the interior. PVC and fiberglass frames insulate far better and are standard in quality egress window installations across NB.

For the window well, install a **clear polycarbonate dome cover** that sheds snow and rain while allowing natural light into the basement. The cover must be easily removable or hinged from the inside — a cover that requires tools or external access to remove defeats the life-safety purpose of the egress window. Choose a cover rated for snow loads appropriate to your area. In northern NB, snow loads can be substantial, so a flat cover will sag and potentially collapse under wet spring snow.

Budget **\$2,500-\$5,000 per egress window installed** in NB, with triple-pane casement windows at the higher end. The investment in a quality, thermally efficient egress window pays back through reduced heat loss, less condensation, and reliable emergency egress regardless of weather conditions.

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Q9

Do I need a building permit to install an egress window in my basement in Fredericton or Moncton?

Yes, you absolutely need a building permit to install an egress window in your basement in both Fredericton and Moncton — no exceptions. Cutting into a foundation wall is structural work that affects the load-bearing capacity of your home, and the NB Building Code requires a permit and inspections for this type of

modification.

Both Fredericton and Moncton have their own **municipal building inspection departments**, which is actually an advantage over rural NB areas that rely on Regional Service Commissions (RSCs). City building departments in Fredericton and Moncton typically process permits within **1-3 weeks**, whereas RSCs in rural areas can take 2-5 weeks. Permit fees for an egress window installation generally run **\$75-\$200** depending on the municipality and scope of work.

The permit application typically requires a description of the work, the location of the new or enlarged window opening on your foundation plan, and details about the **steel lintel** that will carry the load above the cut opening. For straightforward egress window installations in poured concrete foundations, most municipalities accept standard lintel sizing based on the opening width. For concrete block foundations or situations where the opening is near a corner or close to another opening, the building department may require an **engineered drawing from a structural engineer**, which adds \$500-\$1,500 to your project cost.

Once the permit is issued, expect **two to three inspections**: a structural inspection after the opening is cut and the lintel is installed (before the window is set), a rough-in inspection if electrical work is included, and a final inspection after the window, well, and interior finishing are complete. The inspector will verify the window meets the code minimums — **3.8 square foot clear opening, maximum 1500mm sill height from finished floor** — and that the lintel is properly installed and the window well has adequate drainage.

Skipping the permit is a serious mistake that NB homeowners sometimes consider to save time or money. The consequences are real: if you sell your home, a home inspector will identify an unpermitted egress window. The buyer's lawyer or lender may require you to obtain a retroactive permit, which means the work must be inspected as-is — and if it does not meet code, you will be required to bring it into compliance at your expense. In the worst case, if the opening was cut improperly and the lintel is undersized, you could face a structural deficiency that costs thousands to correct. Insurance implications are another concern — if a fire occurs and the egress window fails because it was improperly installed without inspection, your insurer may question the claim.

Your contractor should pull the permit on your behalf as part of the project. If a contractor suggests skipping the permit to save you money, that is a red flag. Any reputable basement contractor in Fredericton or Moncton will include the permit process in their quote and schedule. Budget \$75-\$200 for the permit fee itself — a small fraction of the \$2,500-\$5,000 total installation cost.

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How long does it take to cut and install an egress window in a poured concrete foundation in New Brunswick?

A complete egress window installation in a poured concrete foundation typically takes 2-3 days of on-site work in New Brunswick, though the total project timeline from permit application to final inspection spans 3-6 weeks when you factor in the permit process and inspection scheduling.

The on-site work breaks down into clear phases. **Day one** focuses on exterior excavation and concrete cutting. The crew excavates the soil outside the foundation wall down to footing level where the window will go, which typically means removing 1.5-2 metres of earth depending on your basement depth. Once the exterior is accessible, the concrete cutting begins using a **diamond-blade wall saw**. Cutting through a poured concrete foundation wall — typically 200-250mm (8-10 inches) thick in NB homes — takes 2-4 hours for a standard egress-sized opening of roughly 48 by 36 inches. The cut section, which weighs several hundred pounds, must be carefully removed.

The **steel lintel** is installed immediately above the opening to carry the load from above. The lintel is typically an angle iron or steel channel sized to the opening width, embedded into pockets cut into the concrete on each side of the opening. This is the most critical structural step — the lintel must bear on solid concrete at least 150mm (6 inches) on each side of the opening.

Day two involves setting the window frame, installing the window, waterproofing the exterior of the new penetration with membrane and sealant, placing the window well liner, and backfilling with clear crushed stone for drainage. The drain pipe at the base of the well is connected to the interior weeping tile or sump pump system. Interior finishing around the window — shimming, insulating the gap between the frame and concrete with spray foam, and trimming — typically wraps up on day two or the morning of day three.

Day three (if needed) covers final exterior grading, window well cover installation, interior trim and drywall patching, and cleanup.

The timeline can extend beyond three days in certain situations common in NB. **Concrete block foundations** (prevalent in 1960s-1980s homes across Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John) take longer because blocks must be carefully removed and the opening reinforced differently than poured concrete. **Fieldstone or rubble foundations** in pre-1960s heritage homes are the most challenging and may require 4-5 days plus structural engineering. If the installation includes **electrical work** for the bedroom (outlets, lighting, smoke detectors), add another day and a separate electrical permit.

Seasonal timing matters in NB. **Schedule egress window installations between May and October** when the ground is unfrozen and excavation is straightforward. Winter installations are possible but more expensive — frozen

ground requires mechanical breaking or thawing, which adds \$500-\$1,500 and extra time. The busiest period for NB basement contractors is May through September, so book by March or April to secure your preferred timeline.

The total cost for a complete egress window installation in a poured concrete foundation in NB runs **\$2,500-\$5,000**, and the permit process through your municipal building department (Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John) or Regional Service Commission adds 1-3 weeks before work can begin.

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Q11

What happens if I finish a basement bedroom without a proper egress window in New Brunswick and try to sell the home?

Finishing a basement bedroom without a proper egress window creates a significant legal, financial, and safety liability that will surface when you try to sell your NB home. This is one of the most common and costly basement renovation shortcuts, and it catches homeowners off guard at the worst possible time — during a real estate transaction.

When you list your home, the **home inspector** hired by the buyer will check every bedroom for code-compliant egress. The NB Building Code requires a minimum **3.8 square foot clear opening with a maximum sill height of 1500mm** from the finished floor. A small standard basement window does not meet this requirement. The inspector will flag the bedroom as non-compliant, and this finding goes directly into the inspection report that the buyer and their lawyer review.

The immediate consequences are financial. Your real estate listing cannot legally advertise the basement space as a bedroom if it lacks egress. A home marketed as a "4-bedroom" that is actually a "3-bedroom plus non-conforming basement room" loses significant value. In the NB market, an extra bedroom adds **\$10,000-\$25,000** to a home's value depending on the city and neighbourhood. Losing that bedroom designation because of a missing egress window — which costs \$2,500-\$5,000 to install properly — is a poor trade-off.

Buyers' lawyers in NB routinely flag unpermitted basement bedrooms and may require one of several outcomes before closing: a **price reduction** to cover the cost of bringing the room into compliance, an **undertaking** that you will install a compliant egress window before closing, or in some cases, the deal falls through entirely. Mortgage lenders and insurance companies also pay attention to these discrepancies — a lender's appraiser may not count the room as a bedroom, reducing the appraised value below the purchase price and jeopardizing the buyer's financing.

Beyond the transaction issues, there is a **liability concern** that many homeowners overlook. If someone is sleeping in that basement room and a fire occurs, the lack of a proper egress window could result in a fatality. As the homeowner who finished the space without code-compliant egress, you could face legal liability. Your home insurance may also contest a claim if the space was finished without permits and inspections — unpermitted work is a policy exclusion with many insurers.

If you have already finished a basement bedroom without egress, the solution is straightforward: **hire a basement contractor to cut and install a code-compliant egress window, pull the necessary building permit, and have the work inspected.** In Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, the municipal building departments handle this efficiently within 1-3 weeks for the permit. The installation itself takes 2-3 days and costs \$2,500-\$5,000 in the NB market. You can also apply for a retroactive permit covering the rest of the bedroom finishing if it was done without one, though the inspector may require opening walls to verify framing, insulation, and electrical compliance.

The bottom line is that egress windows are a **life-safety requirement**, not a bureaucratic formality. Installing one properly before you finish the space is far cheaper and less stressful than dealing with it during a home sale.

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Q12

How do window wells for basement egress windows handle spring thaw water and snowmelt in the Miramichi area?

Spring thaw in the Miramichi area presents a serious challenge for egress window wells because snowmelt combines with rising water tables and frozen ground that cannot absorb surface water. March through May is when basement flooding peaks across northern NB, and a poorly designed window well becomes a direct funnel for water into your basement during exactly this period.

Miramichi's soil conditions — a mix of **rocky glacial till and sandy deposits** — generally offer better natural drainage than the heavy clay found in Saint John, but this advantage disappears during spring thaw when the upper soil layers remain frozen while snow melts on the surface. The frozen ground acts as an impermeable barrier, channelling meltwater along the surface and into any low point, including window wells sitting below grade. Add Miramichi's substantial winter snowfall and you have a large volume of water looking for somewhere to go.

A properly engineered window well in the Miramichi area needs three layers of defence: **drainage at the base, surface water management, and a well cover.**

For base drainage, the bottom of the window well must sit on a bed of **200mm (8 inches) minimum of clear crushed stone** with a **4-inch perforated drain pipe** connected to your interior weeping tile system or sump pump. This drain connection is non-negotiable — a window well that relies on soil absorption alone will flood during spring thaw because the surrounding ground is either frozen or saturated. The drain pipe should be wrapped in filter fabric to prevent fine sediment from clogging it over time. Fill the entire well with clear stone rather than native soil to ensure water drops quickly to the drain rather than pooling at window height.

Surface water management means ensuring the **finish grade slopes away from the window well at a minimum 5% grade for 2 metres** in all directions. In Miramichi, where roof runoff and snowmelt volumes are high, make sure your **eavestroughs and downspouts discharge well away from the foundation** — at least 2 metres from the wall — and never into the area near a window well. A downspout dumping water near an egress well is a guaranteed flooding source during thaw.

A **clear polycarbonate dome cover** over the window well keeps direct snow, rain, and debris out while still allowing natural light and maintaining emergency egress capability. During winter, snow that accumulates on the cover slides off or melts gradually rather than filling the well. The cover must be hinged or easily removable from inside the basement — this is a life-safety requirement. Choose a cover rated for the snow loads in the Miramichi region.

If your sump pump handles the window well drainage, a **battery backup system (\$500-\$1,000)** is essential. Spring storms in northern NB frequently cause power outages, and losing your sump pump during peak thaw is exactly when water pressure is highest. A battery backup keeps the pump running for 8-12 hours during an outage.

Budget **\$3,000-\$5,500** for an egress window installation in Miramichi with proper drainage engineering. The drainage system adds cost compared to a bare-minimum install, but it is the difference between a dry basement

bedroom and water damage during your first spring.

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What is the maximum sill height from the basement floor to the bottom of an egress window allowed by NB building code?

The maximum sill height from the finished basement floor to the bottom of the egress window opening is 1500mm (approximately 59 inches or 4 feet 11 inches) under the NB Building Code. This measurement is taken from the finished floor surface to the bottom of the clear opening — not to the bottom of the window frame, but to where a person could actually climb through.

This 1500mm maximum exists for a critical life-safety reason: in an emergency such as a fire, a person — including a child — must be able to reach and climb through the egress window without assistance. If the sill is higher than 1500mm, it becomes extremely difficult for occupants to escape, particularly in smoke-filled conditions where visibility is zero and panic reduces coordination.

In practice, most NB basements have foundation walls that place the existing small windows fairly high on the wall, often near the ceiling of a standard 7-8 foot basement. When converting to an egress window, the contractor typically **cuts the opening downward** from the existing window location to bring the sill within the 1500mm maximum. This is one reason egress window installations require careful planning — you need enough foundation wall below the opening to maintain structural integrity, and the bottom of the opening must clear the exterior grade and footing level.

If your basement has a **finished floor that is lower than the original concrete slab** — for example, if the basement was underpinned or the floor was lowered — the sill height measurement starts from the new finished floor level. This can actually make compliance easier because the lower floor increases the distance from floor to existing window height. Conversely, if you install a **Dricore subfloor system** (which raises the floor by about 25mm), you are slightly reducing the available sill height, though this amount is negligible.

For basements with **low ceilings** — common in older Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John homes where ceiling height may be only 6.5-7 feet — the 1500mm sill height is rarely an issue because the foundation walls are shorter and the windows are proportionally closer to the floor. The bigger challenge in low-ceiling basements is often meeting the **minimum clear opening size of 3.8 square feet** while keeping the top of the window below the sill plate and floor joists above.

If your existing window sill exceeds 1500mm from the floor, you have two options. The first and most common is to **enlarge the opening downward** by cutting more foundation wall. The second is to build a **permanent platform or step** beneath the window, though this approach has limitations — the platform must be permanently attached, not furniture or a removable step, and some inspectors may not accept it depending on design. Cutting the opening

lower is the cleaner, more universally accepted solution.

During your building permit inspection, the municipal inspector in Fredericton or Moncton (or the RSC inspector in rural areas) will measure this sill height as part of the final sign-off. Getting it right the first time avoids costly rework. Your contractor should verify the measurement before closing up any interior finishing around the window.

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