

Single Family Residential - Basement Finish

Frequently asked questions

- 1. Is a permit required to finish a room or rooms of my basement?**
Yes... a permit is required when you are finishing a room or the entire basement.
- 2. What information is do I need to supply for the building permit?**
Draw a floor plan with dimensions, showing the layout of the entire basement. Label the use for all of the rooms. Identify emergency escape windows and window wells, and provide a cost of the work to be performed.
- 2. May I as the home owner, do the remodeling myself?**
Yes, the home owner may elect to hire a contractor, or perform the work themselves.
- 3. Will my basement be inspected?**
Yes.....whenever a building permit is required, there will be associated inspections required to make sure the work meets or exceeds the building safety codes.

Basement Finish Requirements

- 1. Ceiling Heights:** If the finished ceiling will be less than 7' 6" please consult this Building Department.
- 2. Emergency Escapes:** All sleeping rooms must have an egress window or exterior door. Emergency escape windows with a sill height below grade must be provided with an egress window well.
- 3. Smoke Detectors:** Smoke detectors are required in all basements. If the finished basement contains a sleeping room, a smoke detector must be installed on the ceiling or wall in the sleeping room and in the hallway or area immediately outside of the sleeping room. The smoke detectors must be hard-wired with battery backup, and interconnected with existing smoke detectors.
- 4. Fuel Burning Appliances:** Furnaces and water heaters cannot be located in or accessed through a bedroom or bathroom. If the furnace and water heater are being enclosed, adequate combustion air must be provided for these appliances to operate properly. For maintenance purposes, a minimum of 30 inches clear working space must be provided in front of furnaces and water heaters. Maintenance or removal of each appliance must be possible without removing the other or disturbing walls, piping, valves, wiring and junction boxes.
- 5. Insulation:** Check with the Building Department for insulation requirements.
- 6. Space Under Stairs:** If access to the area or space under the basement stairs is provided for storage or other uses, the walls and ceiling of this enclosed space must be fire-protected on the inside with Type X drywall.
- 7. Bathrooms:** Toilets must be provided with a minimum of 24 inches in front of the toilet and 15 inches between the center of the toilet and any sidewall or other obstruction. Showers shall have a minimum inside dimension capable of encompassing a 30 inch circle and be finished 70 inches above the drain with non-absorbent materials.
- 8. Lighting & Ventilation:** Lighting and ventilation are required for any finished portion of the basement. Contact the Building Department for specific requirements.
- 9. Firestopping:** Firestopping must be installed on wood-furred walls at the ceiling level, and at all interconnections of wall spaces at stair areas, soffits or dropped ceilings.

General Information

This Guide was developed by Seward Building Department as a basic plan submittal under the 2000 International Residential Building Code. It is not intended to cover all circumstances.