



# RESIDENTIAL BASEMENT FINISHING

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR EXISTING HOMES

\*A Building permit is required for any alteration or addition to any existing building or structure. *MN State Building Code Section 1300.0120 Subpart 1*. Permit may be applied for at the Austin Building Department. The following Information must be provided at the time of permit application.

### Permit Application Requirements:

A sketch or floor plan of the basement drawn to scale shall be provided. Proposed plans should show all intended work to be done and materials proposed for use. Plans must be accompanied by a building permit application (two copies of the plans are required).

### Typical Code Requirements for Finished Basements:

1. Habitable rooms, hallways, corridors, bathrooms, toilet rooms, and basements shall have a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet. The required height shall be measured from the finish floor to the lowest projection from the ceiling. Areas or rooms with ceiling heights less than 7 feet are considered crawl spaces. Owners with existing basements that have ceiling heights of less than 7 feet may request that a lower ceiling height be approved as an alternative design. Alternative materials, designs, and methods can be considered if requested. These alternatives must be documented on submitted plans. It must be shown that the alternative design maintains safety and meets the intent of the code.
2. **SMOKE ALARMS:** *MNRC R314* When interior alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, or when one or more sleeping rooms are or created in existing dwellings, the individual dwelling unit shall be provided with smoke alarms located as required for new dwellings; the smoke alarms shall be interconnected and hardwired. *R314.5 Interconnection*. Where more than one smoke alarm is required to be installed within an individual dwelling unit in accordance with Section R314.3, the alarm devices shall be interconnected in such a manner that the actuation of one alarm will activate all of the alarms in the individual unit. Physical interconnection of smoke alarms shall not be required where listed wireless alarms are installed and all alarms sound upon activation of one alarm.
  - a. **Exception:** Interconnection of smoke alarms in existing areas shall not be required where alterations or repairs do not result in removal of interior wall or ceiling finishes exposing the structure, unless there is an attic, crawl space or basement available which could provide access for interconnection without removal of interior finishes.
3. Basements with habitable space and every sleeping room in the basement shall have an egress window. Egress windows shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet. Minimum net clear opening height shall be not less than 24 inches. Minimum net clear opening width shall be not less than 20 inches. The minimum width and height requirements do not meet the overall 5.7 clear opening required. Therefore, one or both of the minimum width/height dimensions need to be greater than the minimums. The windowsill height shall not be greater than 44 inches above the finished floor. Egress window wells shall be large enough for the window to be fully opened. The minimum horizontal dimension of the window well shall provide a minimum net clear area of 9 square feet with a minimum horizontal projection and a width of 36 inches. Grade floor openings are windows located such that the sill height of the opening is not more than 44 inches above or below the finished ground level adjacent to the window. Egress windows that meet the definition of a grade floor opening may have a net clear opening of 5 square feet.

4. All rigid foam insulation shall be foil face and rated for exposure with manufacture documentation, otherwise covered with a minimum of ½" sheetrock, ¼" plywood or hardboard.
5. Fire blocking shall be provided to cut off draft openings in concealed spaces. Common areas where fire blocking may be needed are at soffits, drop ceilings, stair stringers, around vent pipes, flues, etc. Concealed spaces should be fire blocked at 10 foot intervals both vertically and horizontally. Common materials used for fire blocking include nominal lumber, plywood, particle board, gypsum, mineral wool and fiberglass insulation.
6. All sill plates direct contact with concrete or masonry must be treated or naturally resistance to decay, such as redwood or cedar.
7. If finishing space under stairs for use as storage or a closet, the entire underside of stairwell must be covered with 1/2 inch sheetrock.
8. A 4 mill poly or other approved moisture barrier must be placed against all concrete or block exterior foundation walls from slab up to grade level prior to applying furring strips or stud wall framing along basement walls.
9. A 4 mill poly or other approved vapor barrier must be provided on the warm side of framed basement walls.
10. Tub and shower enclosure walls must be covered with an approved water resistive sheetrock or backer board. Water-resistant sheet rock (green board) should not be placed over a vapor barrier.
11. Glazing located in hazardous locations should be tempered safety glass. Typical locations where tempered glazing is required are: glazing in doors, sliding panels, and stairways, and glazing around tubs and showers.
12. The minimum dimension (width) of any habitable room is 7 feet.
13. Warm air supply and return air registers are recommended in every room except for areas where odors may be objectionable. The heating system shall be capable of maintaining a minimum room temperature of 68 degrees at a point three feet above the floor and two feet from exterior walls in all habitable rooms.
14. All bathrooms must have a mechanical vent to the outside, or a window of not less then 3 square feet, one-half of which must be able to be opened. Fireplaces should be reflected on a heating permit. Listed gas burning fireplaces shall be installed per the manufacturer's installation instructions. Fireplace specifications need to be kept on site for the inspector's reference.
15. All new gas piping must be air tested. Contact Austin Utilities at 507-433-8886 for an inspection.
16. All electrical, plumbing, and heating work must be installed in accordance with appropriate state codes.

### **Typical Sequence of Inspections**

\* Call for rough electrical, plumbing, and heating inspections prior to the framing inspection. The inspections can be scheduled in any order.

\* Once the rough mechanical inspections are approved, call for a rough framing inspection.

After framing has been approved, call for an insulation inspection.

\* Upon completion of the work, a final building inspection of a basement finish should occur including plumbing and heating, if applicable.

**NOTE: We require contractors and homeowners to allow 15 working days for the city to review your site drawings and plans, as well as compliance to MN State Building Code. When the review process has been completed the City Building Department will contact you after the review is complete and at that time you will pay any applicable permit fees and be allowed to commence work on your project. No work shall be started without prior approval by the Building Official.**

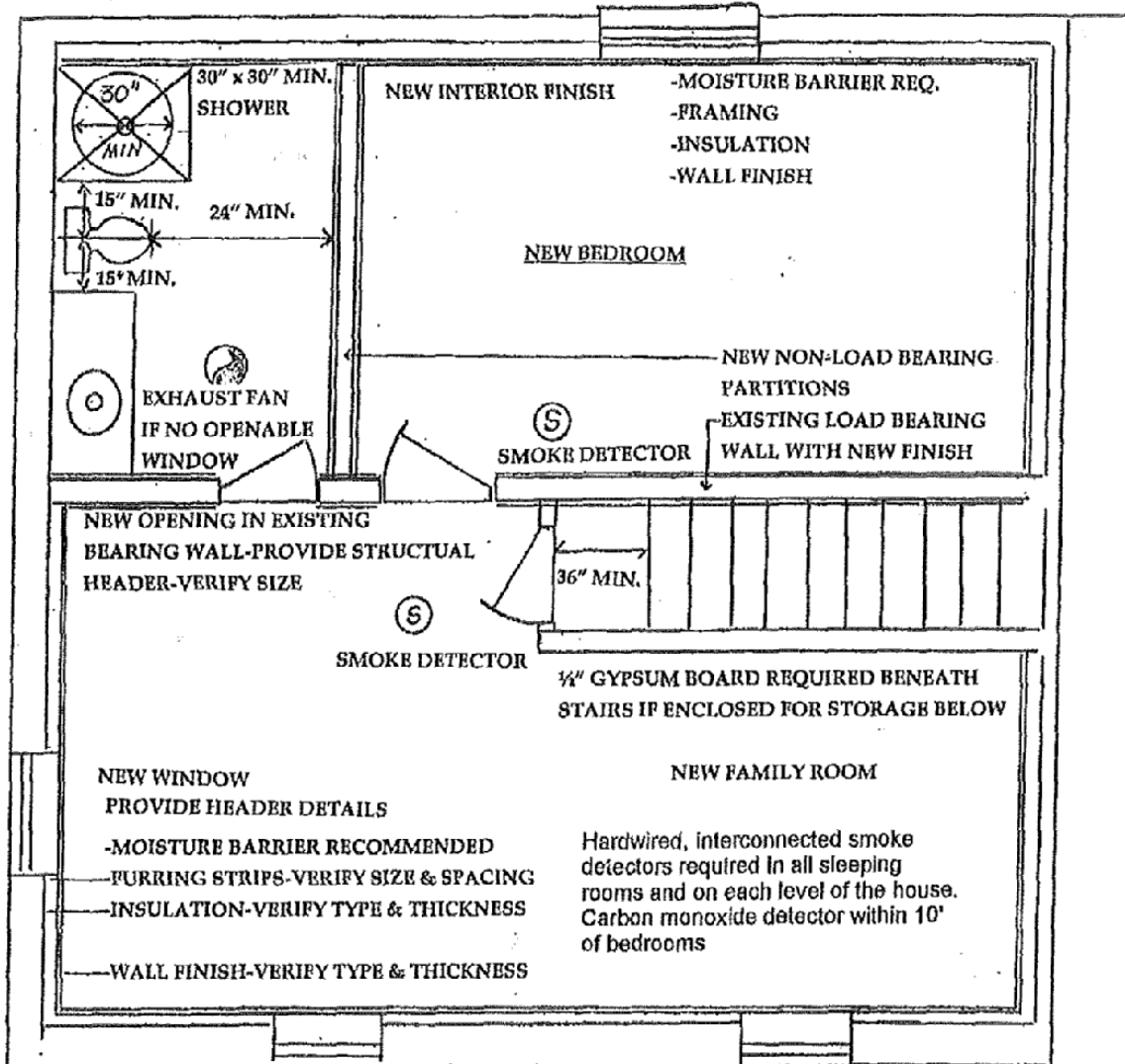
**Call Gopher State One at 1-800-252-1166 to identify utility locations prior to digging!**

**ELECTRICAL:** Applicant must contact Aaron Goslee, MN State Electrical Inspector, at

507-440-1433 for electrical permits and inspections.

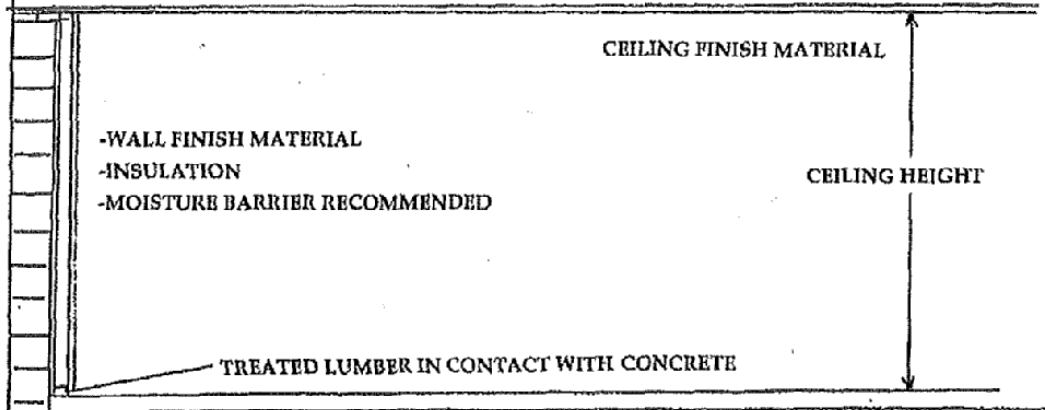
**BASEMENT FINISH SAMPLE PLAN**

EMERGENCY ESCAPE WINDOW REQUIRED  
VERIFY WINDOW SIZE & TYPE



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN (GIVE SCALE)

**FIRST FLOOR STRUCTURAL SYSTEM**



The language & depictions in this hand out is meant as a guide for the construction code & building process and may not contain exact code language. For exact code you may go online at [www.revisor.mn.gov](http://www.revisor.mn.gov) or contact the Austin Building Department.