

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

CREATING HABITABLE SPACE IN BASEMENT

(Applies to existing unfinished basements being converted to habitable space)

This information does not address new construction requirements

The following information is needed to determine whether you can finish off a habitable space (recreation room, etc.) in your basement in accordance with the current State of Connecticut Building Code.

1. Stairs shall not be less than 32" in clear width at all points above the permitted handrail height and below the required headroom height. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.1 (Exception #2).
2. Handrails shall not project more than 4" on either side of the stairway. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.1 (Exception #2).
3. The minimum clear width of stairwell below the handrail height shall not be less than 28" where a handrail is installed on one side and 24" where handrails provided on both sides. R311.5.1 (Exception #2).
4. Headroom on all parts of existing stairway serving existing unfinished basements being converted to a habitable space shall be 6'6" measured vertically from sloped plane adjoining the tread nosing of from the floor surface of the landing or platform. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.2 (Exception).
5. Riser height – maximum riser height for existing stairs serving an unfinished basement shall be 9". The greatest riser height within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8". Connecticut Amendment R311.5.3.1 (Exception).
6. Tread depth – minimum tread depth of existing stairs serving unfinished basements being converted to habitable space shall be 8". The tread depth shall be measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at a right angle to the treads leading edge. The greatest tread depth within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8". Connecticut Amendment R311.5.3.2 (Exception)
7. Handrails shall be provided on at least one side of each continuous run of treads or flight with 4 or more risers and returned to wall or post. A minimum of 1 1/2" space required between handrail and wall. Section R311.5.6. See code for specific requirements on size of handrail.
8. Ceiling height – minimum ceiling height in existing basements being converted to habitable space shall not be less than 6'10" clear, except under beams, girders, pipes, ducts or other obstructions where clear height shall be a minimum of 6'6". Connecticut Amendment R305.1 (Exception #5).
9. If planning to use for sleeping purposes emergency egress window required. Window shall have a clear opening size of 5 square feet and maximum of 44" from finished floor to sill height. Other considerations apply, but are beyond scope of this handout. Please refer to Building Code including Connecticut Amendment R310.1.
10. Bring in a scaled drawing showing ENTIRE basement with locations of all utilities such as a boiler, furnace, hot water heater and electrical panel. If you have a wood burning stove or fireplace or a gas fireplace show these as well. Label all areas in basement to show their intended use.

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11. Make up and combustion air must be addressed. A handout is available to help you address this issue. Please note on your drawing the number of INPUT BTU's on all fuel fired appliances. (i.e. gas or oil) If you have a gas dryer include this as well.
12. Fireblocking Section 502.8 information available at the building department.

If you could come in between 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. when our inspectors are available, this may expedite permit issuance.

Please feel free to call us if we may be of further assistance. We may be reached weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Bring in scaled plans with ENTIRE basement with room layout and label planned uses of new rooms and existing spaces and bring the following information:

1. Stair width above handrail _____.
2. Stair width below handrail _____.
3. Headroom on stairway _____.
4. Riser height _____.
5. Tread depth _____.
6. Lowest finished ceiling height _____. (A) Height under lowest beam, pipe, duct or other obstruction after ceiling finishes installed_____.
7. Sleeping rooms proposed? (Circle one) YES or NO _____.
8. Show total square footage of entire basement _____.
9. Show input BTU's on a furnace or boiler (if gas or oil) _____.
10. Show input BTU's on hot water heater (if gas or oil) _____.
11. Show input BTU's on clothes dryer (if gas) _____.
12. Do you have a wood fireplace or stove in basement? (Circle one) YES or NO _____.
13. Do you have gas fired heaters or fireplaces in basement?(Circle one) YES or NO _____.

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