

## Window Wells

Planning and Development Services Department

[www.opkansas.org](http://www.opkansas.org)

Emergency escape and rescue openings are required in new dwelling basements and basement finishes in existing dwellings. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency escape and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room. OPMC 16.110.R310.1

Exceptions:

Dwellings for which the building permit for the initial construction of that dwelling was issued prior to January 1, 2001, are exempt from the above requirement for subsequent basement remodels; provided, however, that exemption shall only apply if the basement has not been expanded subsequent to January 1, 2001, or that basement does not at any time contain any sleeping areas; conversion of any habitable area to a sleeping area at any time will trigger the emergency escape and rescue requirements set forth above. See OPMC 16.110.R310.1.

1. Storm shelters and basements used only to house mechanical equipment and not exceeding total floor area of 200 square feet.
2. Where the dwelling or townhouse is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section P2904, sleeping rooms in basements shall not be required to have emergency escape and rescue openings provided that the basement has the following:
  - a. One means of egress complying with Section R311 and one emergency escape and rescue opening.
  - b. Two means of egress complying with Section R311.

All emergency escape and rescue openings shall have a minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet with a minimum net clear opening height of 24 inches and a minimum net clear width of 20 inches. Exception: Grade floor openings or below-grade openings shall have a net clear opening of not less than 5 square feet.

Window wells located close to the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) floodplain or engineered drainage swales (as identified at the time of platting) may require special water resistant window wells depending on their location and the floodplain conditions. For questions regarding the following Engineering Services related topics, please call the Engineer of the day at (913) 895-6223.

### **PLOT PLAN REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW DWELLINGS**

The location of any window well adjacent to the FEMA floodplain or an engineered swale shall be indicated on the plot plan.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WINDOW WELLS**

The following requirements must be met for all window wells serving emergency escape and rescue openings based upon the 2018 International Residential Code (IRC) – Section R310.2.3:

- A minimum horizontal area of 9 square feet with a minimum horizontal projection and width of

36 inches. The ladder or steps (if required ) shall be permitted to encroach not more than 6 inches into the required dimension of the window well.

- A permanently affixed ladder or stairway shall be provided for any window well with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches measured from the bottom of the well to top of the wall or top of the guardrail, if a guardrail is provided. Ladder or stairway shall be usable with the window in a fully open position. Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches, shall project at least 3 inches from the wall and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.
- The bottom of the window well shall extend a minimum of 6 inches below the window framing
- Window wells shall be designed for proper drainage by generally connecting to the buildings foundation drainage system or by an approved alternative method.
- Emergency escape and rescue openings installed under the decks and porches shall be fully openable and provide a path not less than 36 inches in height to the yard or court.
- Window wells may be covered with bars, grilles, covers, screens or similar devices, provided the cover is removable with a force of not greater than that which is required for normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.

### MINIMUM LOW OPENING (MLO) DETERMINATIONS

MLO is at grade level for **standard window wells**.

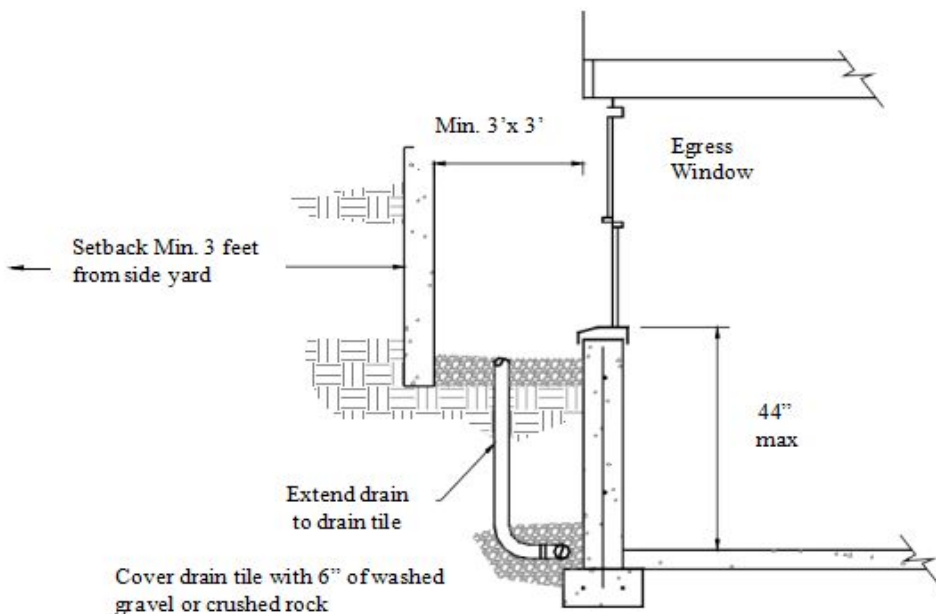
MLO for **water-resistant window wells** is:

- One foot above the energy grade line (EGL) for engineered swales
- Two feet above the FEMA 100-year floodplain

### STANDARD WINDOW WELLS (NON-WATER RESISTANT)

The window well may be of any material approved for ground contact.

A drain with a connection to the perimeter drain tile shall be provided in the bottom of the well.



### STANDARD WINDOW WELL/EGRESS WINDOW

## WATER RESISTANT WINDOW WELLS

Water resistant window wells are required under the following conditions:

- Wells within 15 feet of the edge of an engineered swale with a flow rate of 50 CFS or more
- Wells within 10 feet of an engineered swale and the sides of the swale are steeper than 3:1
- Wells within 25 feet of the FEMA floodplain

## WATER RESISTANT WINDOW WELLS - CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

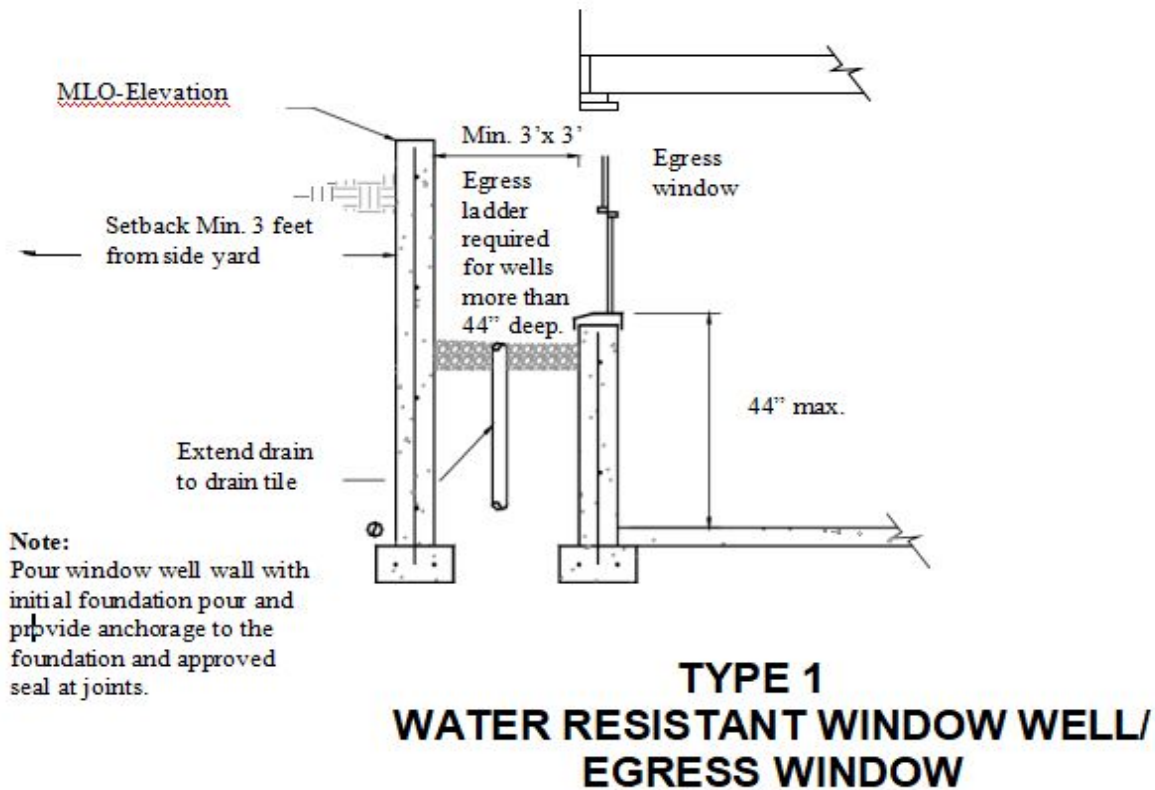
Window well wall materials such as concrete, masonry, corrugated metal, plastic, etc., shall form an impervious barrier to water. Materials not permitted include stone, wood, railroad ties, etc.

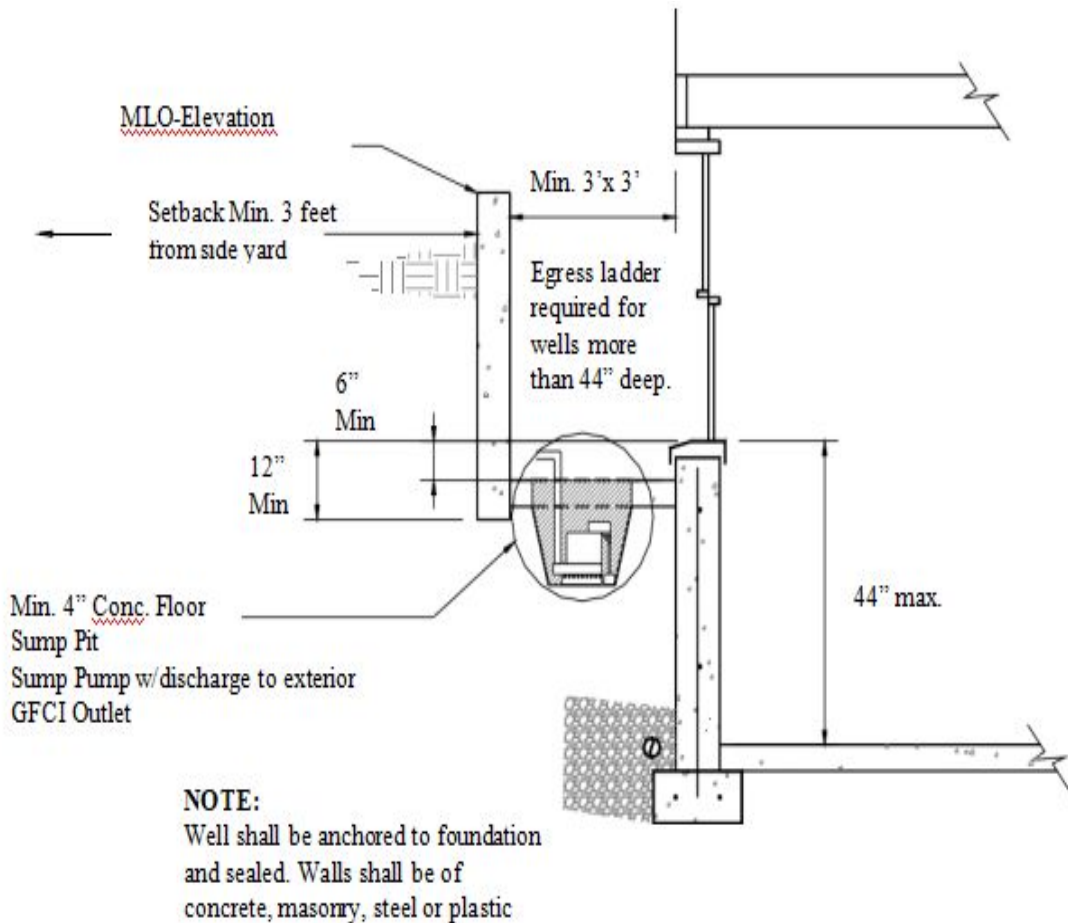
Water resistant wells shall be constructed in one of two ways (see diagrams):

- Poured integrally with the foundation wall and extended to the footing, or
- Permanently attached to the foundation with dowels or anchors with all joints sealed

The following requirements also apply:

- The window well wall shall extend a minimum 12 inches below the bottom of the window wall opening (Types 1 and 2)
- The bottom of the well shall have a minimum of 4 inches of concrete (Type 2). A sump pit, pump with discharge to the exterior, and a GFCI outlet shall be provided in the window well (Type 2)





## TYPE 2 WATER RESISTANT WINDOW WELL/ EGRESS WINDOW

*The City of Overland Park does not warrant the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the information contained in this handout. To verify the city requirements please refer to the official version of the Municipal Code.*