

Vernon Building Department
55 west Main Street, Vernon, CT 06066
860-870-3633

CREATING HABITABLE SPACE IN BASEMENT

(Applies to existing unfinished basements being converted to habitable space) This information does not apply to new construction

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 R311.7.1 (Exception #2).
2. Handrails shall not project more than 4" on either side of the stairway. Connecticut Amendment R311.7.1 (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 are provided on both sides. R311.7.1 (Exception #2).
4. Headroom on all parts of existing stairway serving existing unfinished basements being converted to a habitable space shall be 6'4" measured vertically from sloped plane adjoining the tread nosing from the floor surface of the landing or platform. Connecticut Amendment R311.7.2 (Exception #2).
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 R311.7.5.1 (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 R311.7.5.2 (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 1½" space required between handrail and wall. Section R311.7.8. 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' 8" clear, except under beams, girders, pipes, ducts or other obstructions where clear height shall be a minimum of 6'4". Connecticut Amendment R305.1 (Exception #4).

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. Makeup and combustion air must be addressed. Louvered doors, wall louvers, mechanically-induced air or ducted air are some common solutions. Provide details on your plans. Please note on your drawing the location of all gas or oil-fired appliances. If you have a gas dryer include this as well.
11. Fire blocking Section 302.11 information available at the building department. A handout showing some common solutions is available at the building department and online.
12. Windows are typically required for any habitable rooms. Show where existing windows are in the basement and their size.
13. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are required in the new space and throughout the existing parts of the home. Code sections R314 and R315
14. Access to the boiler/furnace and oil tank must be provided. There must be room to work on the equipment and replace it without taking down walls. M1305.1
15. A furnace/boiler or oil tank may not generally be located in a bedroom or bathroom. IMC303.3
16. The electrical panel may not be installed in a clothes closet or bathroom. E3705.7
17. 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. We will also need a sketch of the main (first) floor, showing the location of the bedrooms and bathroom and indicate if there is a full or half bath.

The Vernon Building Department is offering this informational handout as representative of typical issues or questions that may arise on a typical job. The Town assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. The installer is required to follow all applicable codes. No handout could possibly cover all situations, nor is it intended to.

Please feel free to call us if we may be of further assistance. Our phone number is 860-870-3633. We may be reached Monday - Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.