



City of Twin Falls
Building Department
324 Hansen Street East
P.O. Box 1907
Twin Falls, ID 83303-1907

Phone: 208-735-7238
Fax: 208-736-2256
www.tfid.org

Basement—Finish a Bedroom or Other Room— Requirements for a Residence

1. Finishing a bedroom or other room in a basement requires a building permit and an electrical permit at a minimum. To determine the building permit cost, a reasonable estimate of the cost of construction is needed, labor and material. If the homeowner is doing the work, we need an estimated cost of material, and we will make an adjustment for labor. For interior remodel, the number of circuits that are going to be added or modified needs to be determined.

2. Please provide a scaled drawing of the basement area. (1/2" or 1/4" per foot) It should show the entire basement outline and identify the hall, laundry area, bathroom(s), bedroom(s), furnace and water heater areas (existing and proposed). Even if the drawing is to scale, please provide dimensions of the spaces. If necessary, provide a separate drawing of smaller spaces, at a larger scale, so any specific details may be noted. With this information, we should be able to review and issue these permits over the counter.

Habitable space in a basement is required to have a minimum ceiling height of 84 inches (7 feet). If the ceiling height is less than 84 inches (7 feet), the space can still be finished and used, but it is not considered habitable space, and any sleeping rooms are not considered legal bedrooms (some exceptions do apply).

3. All bedrooms require an egress window or a door directly to the outside from that sleeping room. Unless the City of Twin Falls has a record (a permit issued specifically for a bedroom) of a basement bedroom, it is not a legal bedroom unless it has an egress window or door opening directly to the outside. The egress window sill cannot be more than 44 inches above the finished floor. The window, in the open position, must have an opening a minimum 20 inches wide and 24 inches high. But then the code throws in a kicker. That opening must be at least 5.7 square feet. Basically a 4 X 4 sliding window will make this and a single or double hung window must be at least 3 feet wide and 5 feet tall. (Open the window and measure it just to be on the safe side prior to buying the window.) You will also need a window well that is 9 square feet minimum and 3 feet in depth. If the vertical egress out of the window well is greater than 44" a permanently affixed ladder will be required.

4. All exposed concrete walls are required to be insulated in the area to be finished. Idaho Code requires a minimum R-10/13 insulation on the exterior walls. We recommend building a 2 X 4 wall with a treated bottom plate and the wall pulled out from the concrete about a 1/4" or more so the studs are not in contact with the concrete (this will also provide room for the R-13 Batt insulation). This stud wall is typically a non-bearing wall and usually only holds up the insulation, wiring and drywall (which would allow the studs to be framed at 24 inches on center.) A vapor barrier **NO** longer needs to be installed on the interior/drywall side of the insulation in basement. (Industry testing has shown that a vapor barrier installed on the interior side of a concrete basement wall traps moisture in the stud cavity, which can cause significant damage.) Dampproofing and/or waterproofing on the exterior side of basement wall(s) is required.

5. All new wiring in a bedroom is required to be arc-fault protected. An outlet is required within 6 feet of a door opening and then a maximum 12 feet apart. Any section of wall that is 2 feet or wider does require an outlet. It is suggested that you place an outlet within a couple of feet of the corners of the room to make sure the only outlet on that wall does not wind up behind the headboard of the bed. (Outlets are easy to install and relatively cheap before the drywall is installed.) Outlet spacing is the same as in a bedroom for all other habitable spaces.

6. When a new bedroom is created in the basement, or when there is an addition, the IRC requires line voltage smoke detectors with a battery backup be installed in each bedroom, outside the bedroom areas and at least 1 smoke detector on each floor level. The smoke detectors outside the bedroom areas can be used as the smoke detectors on that floor level. The smoke detectors are to be interconnected so if one is activated, all will sound. *Physical* interconnection of smoke alarms shall **not** be required where listed wireless alarms are installed and all alarms sound upon activation of one alarm.

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 the removal of interior finishes. The removal or rearrangement of insulation is not considered removal of finish material.

Note: Areas not accessible for hardwiring of smoke detectors would still require battery operated smoke detectors installed in each bedroom, outside bedroom areas and at least one smoke detector on each floor level.

Carbon monoxide alarms are also required when there is an attached garage or where fuel fired appliances exist.