



New Castle County Government Center  
87 Reads Way  
New Castle, DE 19720  
Department of Land Use - Building Inspections

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Date: **June 30, 2010**  
Subject: **Drains for egress window wells**  
References: **2003 International Residential Code**

This Staff Code Interpretation is intended to be used to clarify Section R405.1 (Concrete or Masonry foundations) in the above referenced Code Edition.

Below is the exact text from the section of the 2003 International Residential Code in question.

***Section R405.1, Concrete or masonry foundations. Drains shall be provided around all concrete or masonry foundations that retain earth and enclose habitable or usable spaces located below grade. Drainage tiles, gravel or crushed stone drains, perforated pipe or other approved systems or materials shall be installed at or below the area to be protected and shall discharge by gravity or mechanical means into an approved drainage system. Gravel or crushed stone drains shall extend at least 1 foot beyond the outside edge of the footing and 6 inches above the top of the footing and be covered with an approved filter membrane material. The top of open joints of drain tiles shall be protected with strips of building paper, and the drainage tiles or perforated pipe shall be placed on a minimum of 2 inches of washed gravel or crushed rock at least one sieve size larger than the tile joint opening or perforation and covered with not less than 6 inches of the same material.***

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**Question:** Does a drain need to be provided for a below grade window when a window well is provided for a small hopper window in a foundation wall?

**Answer:** Yes, the window well needs to be protected from the accumulation of water. It's typically a drain that connects to the foundation drain. The drain (assumed vertical) can be of any of the materials indicated in 405.1, including gravel.

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**STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION**

**Code Updates:** This code interpretation is unaffected by the adoption of the 2015 IRC.

George O. Haggerty  
Code Official

# STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION