



Building Code Clarifications - 12. Interior Environment

12.1 (13-172)

Natural light and ventilation (part I)

This applies to both buildings being proposed as new construction and to those intended as alterations of existing buildings.

Any building being reviewed for permit, utilizing borrowed light and ventilation (air) or courts for access to light and air, shall meet the following minimum standards in addition to the code requirements delineated in Chapter (13-172).

A. Borrowed Light and Air

1. The ceiling height between the source of natural light and air and the remote room borrowing the light and/or air shall be no less than 10'-0" at its lowest point. The head of the window which is the source of light being borrowed shall be no less than 9'-0" above the finished floor.
2. Not more than two rooms may borrow light or ventilation in one dwelling unit.
3. The room borrowing the light shall be adjacent to the room with the natural light source except that an intervening enclosed closet, bathroom or kitchen facility may be permitted if the total enclosed depth (dimension perpendicular to the plane of the windows) of the intervening space is not over 7 feet. The space above the enclosed area shall be left open to satisfy requirements of sections 13-172-070 and 13-172-090.

B. Courts and Yards

1. Every court shall have a minimum length (dimension parallel to the plane of the windows) at least 50% greater than the total width of the window openings transferring the required natural light and ventilation. The total width of the windows shall be measured from end to end of the bank of windows without deductions for any solid piers or walls between the openings. Required courts and yards shall be open to the sky.
2. The required width (dimension perpendicular to the plane of the windows) of an inner or outer court or yard need not exceed 15 feet regardless of the width calculated in accord with Section 13-172-130.

12.2 (13-172)**Natural light and ventilation (part II)**

Effective immediately, the following clarifications shall apply to the Chapter 12(13-172), *Light and Ventilation*, of the Chicago Building Code. This memo is a supplement to the memo dated August 19, 1999 regarding the same subject and shall apply both to buildings being proposed as new construction and to existing buildings intended to be altered. This memo does NOT replace the memo dated August 19, 1999. Both memos work in conjunction with each other.

Any building being reviewed for permit as of the date of this memo utilizing borrowed light and ventilation (air) shall meet the following minimum standards in addition to the code requirements delineated in Chapter 12(13-172).

- Natural Light and Ventilation shall be required for all dwelling units as required by Table 18-28-403.3 Ventilation Requirements for Private Dwellings The phrase “living, dining, and sleeping rooms” used in Chapter 12(13-172) shall be interpreted as “Habitable Room” as defined in Chapter 2(13-4). Any room or space over 70 square feet shall be considered “Habitable” except for kitchen and baths.
- Multi-purpose rooms are only allowed in buildings permitted prior to April 1, 1998. Nothing in Chapter 12(13-172) shall be interpreted to imply that a multi-purpose room may be used in a building permitted after that date.
- The required open space between the room with the natural light or ventilation source and the room borrowing the light or ventilation shall not be located such that a door installed between the rooms would block the light/air between the two rooms.
- An area or space that is part of another room that has direct access to natural light and ventilation does not require either independent or “borrowed” natural light and ventilation. To be considered part of another room, the adjoining area or space must comply with all of the following criteria:
 - In a plane perpendicular to the source of natural light and ventilation, a minimum of 50% of the length of the plane in the adjoining area or space shall overlap with the room providing the source of natural light and ventilation
 - The adjoining space must have no more than three (3) walls. Any partition over 4'6" above finish floor level is considered a wall.
 - The room with the direct access to light and ventilation must have enough natural light and ventilation to address the needs of the entire square footage.