SMOKE - THE SILENT KILLER
Thousands of fires occur in residences each year. Many of these fires occur at night when the occupants are asleep. Severe injuries or death can be the result of these fires if the occupants are asleep and unaware the fire is in progress. Death usually results from asphyxiation long before the fire reaches the occupants.

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES
In order to prevent the loss of life, the Minnesota State Building Code requires smoke alarms to be installed in dwellings to alert the occupants of a fire.

The code also has emergency escape and rescue opening requirements for sleeping rooms. Dwelling units are required to have windows or doors that may be used for emergency escape or rescue including basements. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room, but shall not be required in adjoining areas of the basement.

The size of windows and doors required in the code are based on extensive research to determine the proper relationships of height and width of window openings to adequately serve for both rescue and escape.

Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that opens to a public way, so the occupants may escape or be rescued directly from the room to the outside without having to travel through the building itself.

When a fire occurs, time is critical to survival. There may not be enough time to instruct family members and guests about the proper window operation or to perform complex operations to get the window open. The code requires windows and doors used for emergency escape or rescue to be readily openable without any special knowledge or effort. This means that no window sashes may be tilted or removed to obtain the required open area, width or height. Local building officials can be
Replacement windows installed in buildings meeting the scope of the International Residential Code shall be exempt from the requirements of Sections R310.1, R310.1.1, R310.1.2, and R310.1.3 if the replacement window meets the following conditions:

1. The replacement window is the manufacturer’s largest standard size window that will fit within the existing window frame or existing rough opening.
   The replacement window shall be permitted to be the same operating style as the existing window or a style that provides for a greater window opening area than the existing window.
2. The rooms or areas are not used for any Minnesota state licensed purpose requiring an egress window; and
3. The window is not required to be replaced pursuant to a locally adopted rental housing, or rental licensing code (R310.1.5).

A special note regarding guards around windows: The Minnesota State Building Code does not specify requirements for guards around window wells to keep persons from falling into them, falls can and do occur. Because of the variations in the size, location and depth of window wells and since a guard could present an impediment to escape or rescue, the code is silent. The potential for falls into a window well should be evaluated by the homeowner and suitable guards or visual barriers provided based on the location, depth and size of the well. Barriers, guards or covers installed to prevent falls must be placed in such a way that does not impede use of the window well for escape and rescue. If covers are used, the effects of snow on the ability to open or remove them in an emergency must also be evaluated. The ever-increasing concern for security, particularly in residential buildings has created a fairly large demand for security devices such as grilles, bars and steel shutters. Unless properly designed and constructed, these security devices over emergency windows can completely defeat the purpose of the emergency escape and rescue window. The code makes provisions for use of security devices, provided the release mechanism has been approved by the building official and it is operable from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge. Fire deaths have been attributed to the inability of the individual to escape from the building because the security bars prevented emergency escape. Security devices should only be installed where absolutely necessary and only with a permit after an evaluation by your local building and fire official.

To confirm if your contractor is licensed in Minnesota contact the:
Department of Labor and Industry
Residential Building Contractors
Phone: (651) 284-5069 or 1-800-657-3944
www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html
E-mail: DLI.Contractor@state.mn.us

The State of Minnesota adopts a set of construction standards known as the Minnesota State Building Codes (MSBC). The MSBC contains safety requirements relating to structure, mechanical, plumbing, energy, electrical, elevators, manufactured buildings and life safety.

The information in this brochure is for general reference for residential construction projects. Contact your municipal building official regarding permits and specific code requirements for residential construction within your community.