R324.6.2.2

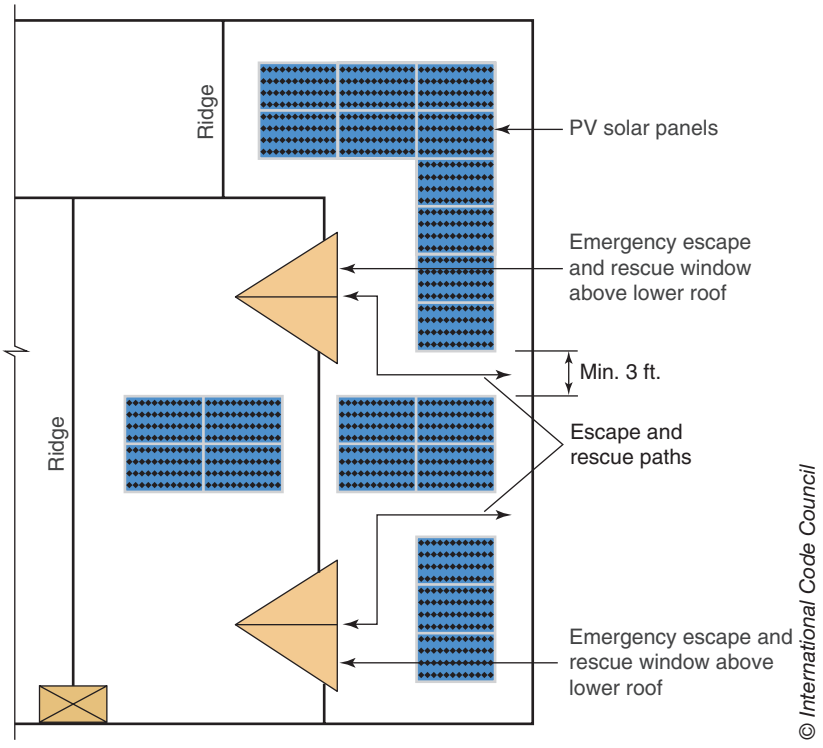
Solar Panels near Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings

CHANGE TYPE: Addition

CHANGE SUMMARY: Rooftop-mounted photovoltaic solar energy panels and modules are not permitted to be installed directly below emergency escape and rescue openings.

2018 CODE: **R324.6.2.2 Emergency escape and rescue opening.** Panels and modules installed on dwellings shall not be placed on the portion of a roof that is below an emergency escape and rescue opening. A pathway not less than 36-inches (914 mm) wide shall be provided to the emergency escape and rescue opening.

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: As covered in Section R310, an emergency escape and rescue opening is required in every bedroom, basement and habitable attic to provide occupants a way out of the dwelling in case fire, smoke or other emergency blocks the means of egress path. The code also provides minimum net dimensions for the escape opening as well as operational criteria for windows and coverings. To ensure a path from the escape opening to a public way or yard that opens to a public way, the IRC spells out window well and area well requirements and requires a path not less than 36 inches high when the opening is under a deck or porch. Similarly, new language in the photovoltaic (PV) solar energy provisions is concerned with providing a safe path for the occupant climbing



A 36-inch-wide pathway is required for emergency escape and rescue openings above roof-mounted PV solar panels.

out of an emergency escape and rescue opening that is above a roof. Installing a PV solar panel below the escape opening would cause an unsafe condition in an emergency situation. The required clear path must be at least 36 inches wide to provide emergency escape from the roof as well as emergency access to the roof as stated in Section R324.6.