Home Modification Information Clearinghouse

Consumer Factsheet

Managing water in the bathroom

The purpose of this fact sheet is to assist people in making decisions about using indoor spaces, particularly the bathroom, for activities using water. Bathrooms are used for many activities – showering, bathing, rinsing items - some have toilets and even laundry facilities.

All these activities use water and most bathrooms are designed to manage water in a way that keeps the structural elements of this room dry and in good condition. Tiles, grout, or laminated shower panels are not themselves waterproof, and a special waterproofing process is undertaken before bathrooms are used.

For reasons such as poor health, impaired mobility or home renovation, you may decide to shower over the drainage hole in the floor of your bathroom or laundry. People sometimes wash pets or rinse dirty items over this drainage hole as well.

This fact sheet is designed to assist you make the decision as to whether this is a safe option for you and your home.

Water in the bathroom

The Building Code of Australia and the Australia Standard (AS 3740-1994) outline the **minimum** requirements for waterproofing in residential bathrooms. These requirements include:

- waterproofing the full floor **within** the shower recess
- at least 100mm over the hob or step down onto the bathroom floor should be waterproofed
- at least 150mm up the walls inside the shower walls needs to be waterproofed
- the vertical angle between any two walls in the shower needs to be waterproofed up to at least 1800mm high
- the entire bathroom floor needs to be waterproofed if it is a timber, plywood or particleboard floor, or if it is above the ground floor of the house.

Consumer Factsheet: Managing water in the bathroom
January 2012 ✦ ISSN 1836-9994✦ ISBN 978-0-7334-3133-3
www.homemods.info

Showering someone or rinsing items on the floor may cause the water to seep through the grout and under the tiles and travel under the floor to porous materials (especially wood). This can affect a number of load bearing or structural elements such as a wooden under-floor, doorframe, the studs in the walls and the joists and bearers in the floor. On a concrete slab, the water can travel along the slab to the wall studs or travel under the tiles to adjoining rooms.

The floor in a shower typically has a slight graded slope, which helps water run down the drain – a bathroom floor is normally level and so does not usually have this slope and as a result water can pool and run out of the doorframe to adjacent passages or rooms.

Where does the wastewater go?

When you use the sink, shower recess or the bathtub, wastewater (also called grey water) is taken out in the sewer pipe or other pipes designed for this purpose. The drainage pipe in the floor is designed to prevent flooding in the event of an overflow from a bath or sink, and is not for everyday use. The pipe connected to the hole in the floor may be connected to the sewer line but may not be connected to anywhere and discharge under the house.

Electricity in the bathroom

The safety of people using the bathroom is an important thing to consider. Water and electrical appliances and power points do not mix and there are laws about how close you can have a water outlet to a power point. The Electrical Standards, (AS/NZS 3000:2007), are very clear about how close a water source can be to a power point. It is essential that the location of power points is considered if using a shower hose outside the shower recess, as the space then becomes a ‘shower without barriers’ and you need to ensure that there are no electrical points within the zone 0. It is very important to you seek the advice of an electrician if there are power points on your bathroom walls; only a qualified electrician can tell you if the power points are in a safe location.

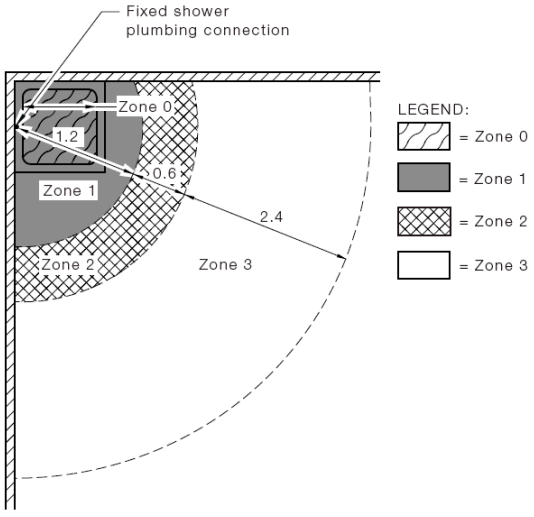

FIGURE 6.3 BATHS AND SHOWERS, ZONE DIMENSIONS (PLAN)—SHOWER WITH BASE WITHOUT BARRIERS

AS/NZS 3000:2007 page 252

January 2012 + ISSN 1836-9994+ ISBN 978-0-7334-3133-3
www.homemods.info

Alternatives

If you are caring for someone who needs to be showered but cannot get into the shower recess, your local occupational therapist should be able to advise you if there are any other ways of managing this situation.

You can contact your local occupational therapist by telephoning your local hospital or community health centre. You can also contact the OT AUSTRALIA office in your state.

OT AUSTRALIA ACT	Phone: (03) 9415 2900
OT AUSTRALIA NSW	Phone: (02) 9648 3225
OT AUSTRALIA NT	Phone: 0408 448 080
OT AUSTRALIA QLD	Phone: (07) 3397 6744
OT AUSTRALIA WA	Phone: (08) 9388 1490
OT AUSTRALIA VIC	Phone: 1300 OT AUST [68 2878]
OT AUSTRALIA TAS	Phone: 1300 OT AUST [68 2878]
OT AUSTRALIA SA	Phone: (08) 8342 0022

Alternatives for washing pets or rinsing off items (such as muddy boots or diving equipment) is to use the bathtub with a strainer over the drainage hole to catch any debris, or rinse them outside near the outdoor drain or on the grass using a hose.

January 2012 + ISSN 1836-9994+ ISBN 978-0-7334-3133-3
www.homemods.info