


# BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing  
**AIBC, EGBC, BOABC**

**File No: 24-0022**

**INTERPRETATION**

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Interpretation Date:	May 21, 2024
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2024
Subject:	Adaptable Bathrooms
Keywords:	Adaptable, bathroom, water closets, clearances
Building Code Reference(s):	3.8.5.7.(1)(c) & (d), A-3.8.5.7.(1)(c) &(d)
Question:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Is it mandatory that the water closet in an adaptable bathroom be adjacent to a wall?</li><li>2. Is it mandatory that the water closet in an adaptable bathroom be provided with 900 mm side clearance at the initial installation of the water closet?</li><li>3. If the initial installation of an adaptable bathroom includes a bathtub, is it mandatory to provide 1700 mm diameter floor area clearances in the bathroom?</li></ol>
Interpretation:	<p>1. Yes.</p> <p>Clause 3.8.5.7.(1)(a) to locate the water closet within 460 mm to 480 mm is a mandatory requirement for the initial installation.</p> <p>It would be difficult for a homeowner to relocate a water closet to make it accessible in the future. The building code mandates that the water closet be in a fixed location in the bathroom with a wall on one side to accommodate future grab bars.</p> <p>Refer to the Building and Safety Standards Branch Bulletin 24-09R.</p> <p><a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/construction-industry/building-codes-standards/bc-codes/technical-bulletins">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/construction-industry/building-codes-standards/bc-codes/technical-bulletins</a>.</p> <p></p> <hr/> <p>Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair</p>
<p>The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, EGBC and BOABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The Building and Safety Standards Branch, Province of BC and the City of Vancouver participate in the committee's proceedings with respect to interpretations of the BC Building Code. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the local <i>Authority Having Jurisdiction</i>. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.</p>	

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2. Yes.

Clause 3.8.5.7.(1)(b) to provide 900 mm side clearance at the water closet is a mandatory requirement for the initial installation.

Although Clause 3.8.5.7.(1)(c) requires that the “*plumbing system*” be designed to accommodate the future installation of a lavatory with adequate clear spaces, this only applies to the future clearances in front of the lavatory. It does not permit the initial installation of a lavatory to encroach into the 900 mm side clearance for the water closet.

As stated in the Bulletin 24-09R, “the functional clear space adjacent the water closet described in Article 3.8.5.7. of Division B is required at the time of initial construction. This helps ensure the dwelling unit is visitable by people with diverse abilities by providing reasonable access to a water closet as part of a visit.” It also stated that the 900 mm side clearance for the water closet can be provided within a zero-threshold shower if it is provided in the initial installation.

3. No.

3.8.5.7.(1)(d) requires that the “*plumbing system*” be designed to accommodate a future shower per 3.8.3.17.(1) or a future bathtub per 3.8.3.18.(1).

The Note to Part 3 – A-3.8.5.7.(1)(c) & (d) clarifies that the “*plumbing system*” means the water supply as well as drainage and venting system only. It does not include all plumbing components as defined in Section 1.4 of Division A for “*plumbing systems*”.

3.8.3.17.(1)(b) requires future showers to have a 900 mm deep x 1500 mm wide floor area clearance in front of the shower.

3.8.3.18.(1)(a) requires future bathtubs to be located in a room with a clear floor space of not less than 1700 mm diameter.



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Since 3.8.5.7.(1)(d) provides the option to design for a future shower or bathtub, the initial installation can include a bathtub without the 1700 mm diameter clearance on the basis that the homeowner will convert the existing bathtub to an accessible shower in the future.

Note that adaptable requirements are temporary unrestricted matters with time limitations in the Building Act.

Local governments can adopt bylaws to require additional adaptable design features that are more than the building code requirements. Their bylaws cannot include less restrictive requirements than are required by the building code.

Check with the AHJ to determine if they have additional adaptable requirements within their community.

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