

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 24-0022-REV1

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date:	May 21, 2024 (<i>Revised October 21, 2025</i>)
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)(b),(c) & (d), A-3.8.5.7.(1)(c) &(d)
Question:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is it mandatory that the water closet in an adaptable bathroom be adjacent to a wall?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?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?

Interpretation:

1. No.

The wording of Clause 3.8.5.7.(1)(b) has been revised by Item 70 of Ministerial Order No. BA 2025 02 as indicated below:

70. Clause 3.8.5.7.(1)(b) is amended by adding “, or other assembly capable of supporting the future installation of grab bars conforming to Clause 3.8.3.12.(1)(f),” after the words “and the wall”.

Clause **3.8.5.7.(1)(b)** to locate the water closet within 460 mm to 480 mm **of a wall or other assembly capable of supporting the future installation of grab bars** is a mandatory requirement. **So, the wall or other assembly must be installed at the initial installation.**



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

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 *Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.

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2. Yes.

Refer to the Building Safety and Standards Branch Bulletin **B24-09-R4**.

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, 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.

As stated in the Bulletin, the 900 mm side clearance can be used to accommodate non-fixed furnishings such as removeable shelving or furniture for storage.

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 an unrestricted matter 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.



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