



Bathroom Compliance Guide: New Zealand Building Code

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A new bathroom in New Zealand must meet the Building Code whether or not it needs a building consent. These are the 15 rules that matter most on a new bathroom installation, with the Building Code clause each one comes from.

This guide is a plain-language summary for Sorted Home Solutions clients. It is not legal advice, and your council has the final say on consent for your property.

Consent and licensed trades

- 1. All work must comply with the Building Code.** This applies even when no building consent is required. Exempt work is still inspected against the Code if a problem or a sale brings it to the council's attention.
- 2. Adding fixtures needs a building consent.** Adding a new bathroom, or any extra toilet, shower, bath or basin, needs consent. Moving or replacing existing fixtures is exempt only if the number of fixtures does not increase and an authorised plumber does the work ([Schedule 1, exemption 35](#)). Structural changes, such as removing a load bearing wall, also need consent.
- 3. Check tiled showers with your council before work starts.** [MBIE Determination 2024/054](#) found that replacing a shower with a tiled one can fall under the exemption for internal linings. Some councils, including [Hutt City](#), still state that installing or replacing a tiled shower needs consent. Get the council's answer in writing.
- 4. Plumbing and drainage must be done by an authorised person.** Only a tradesperson licensed by the [Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board](#) can fix or unfix any pipe, plumbing fixture or appliance, or alter a drain. Homeowners cannot do this work

themselves. Ask to see the practising licence and check its expiry date.

5. Electrical work must be done by a registered electrician. Anyone paid to do prescribed electrical work must be registered and hold a current practising licence ([WorkSafe](#)). A Certificate of Compliance must be issued for any fixed wiring work, including new power points.

Waterproofing and wet-area surfaces

These rules come from Building Code clause E3 Internal Moisture and its Acceptable Solution [E3/AS1](#).

6. Floors must be impervious and easy to clean. This applies to any room with a sanitary fixture. In an open-plan space, the impervious floor must extend at least 1.5 m from every fixture. Tiles must absorb no more than 6% water and have waterproof grouted joints.

7. Walls must be impervious wherever they can be splashed. Shower wall linings must run to at least 1800 mm above the shower floor, and at least 300 mm above the shower rose. The top edge and all joints must be sealed so water cannot get behind the lining.

8. Tiled showers need a waterproof membrane under the tiles. The membrane must comply with AS/NZS 4858 and be installed by, or under the supervision of, an approved applicator ([BRANZ](#)). In an unenclosed shower, the floor within 1500 mm of the shower rose must fall at least 1:50 towards the floor waste.

9. Waterproofing must last at least 15 years. This is the durability period under clause B2 for wet-area waterproofing systems ([BRANZ](#)). Keep the product details and the applicator's sign-off as proof.

10. An overflow must not damage a neighbouring home. Where a bathroom sits above or beside another household unit, such as in an apartment, the floor must contain an accidental overflow and drain it through a floor waste.

Waterproofing in detail

The detail below follows the [Code of Practice for Internal Wet-area Membrane Systems](#) (4th edition, February 2020), the industry method the Building Code recognises for wet-area membranes.

Products

Every part of the system must meet AS/NZS 4858 Wet area membranes, and the primer, membrane, reinforcing and sealants must all come from the same supplier. The membrane class is chosen to suit how much the floor and walls will move.

Class	Flexibility	Typical products	Where it suits
Class 1	Rigid	Fibreglass resin, water-borne epoxy	Stable surfaces with no cracks, such as sound concrete
Class 2	Flexible	Acrylic, two-part polymer cement	Surfaces where cracks are possible
Class 3	Elastomeric	Polyurethane, flexible sheet, self-adhesive sheet	Surfaces with visible cracks or the most movement, such as timber floors

- Bitumen-based membranes must not be used under tiles or vinyl.
- The tile adhesive must be compatible with the membrane and recommended by both suppliers.

The surface underneath

- New concrete needs at least 28 days to cure, and must test at no more than 75% relative humidity before the membrane goes on.
- Plywood must be H3 CCA-treated, at least 18 mm thick over supports at 400 mm centres, with no more than 18% moisture.
- Compressed fibre-cement sheet is acceptable. Particleboard must not be used as a new surface in any wet area.
- The fall to the waste must be built into the floor or screed. The membrane itself must not be used to create the fall.

How it is applied

1. The plumber fixes every pipe, mixer body and waste in place before any membrane is applied.
2. The surface is primed with the supplier's primer, including sheet edges.
3. Internal corners get a 25 x 25 mm fillet or a 10 mm sealant fillet where the supplier requires it. A bond-breaker is installed wherever two surfaces could move against each other.
4. All internal corners and floor-to-wall junctions are reinforced with a bandage.
5. The membrane is applied in the supplier's number of coats and left to cure fully. It is dressed down into the floor waste and sealed around every pipe and mixer.
6. The finished membrane is checked for pinholes, bubbles, thin spots and damage from other trades.
7. The floor is flood tested: the waste is plugged, the area filled to the height of the lowest threshold, and checked for water loss after at least 12 hours.

8. Tiling starts only after the test passes. The applicator then supplies a Producer Statement (PS3).

If a pipe or fitting is moved after the membrane is on, that area must be waterproofed again.

Where the membrane must go

Area	Minimum extent
Shower walls	To the higher of 1800 mm above the shower floor or 300 mm above the shower rose
Shower with a fixed screen or door	Out to the line of the screen or door
Shower with a curtain	300 mm beyond the curtain line
Open shower, fixed rose	1500 mm beyond the rose
Open shower, hand-held rose	600 mm beyond the furthest reach of the hand piece
Bathroom floor	The whole floor of an enclosed room, including under vanities and fixtures
Floor-to-wall junction outside the shower	At least 75 mm up the wall. BRANZ recommends 150 mm
Behind vanities and fixtures with a water supply	At least 150 mm beyond the top and each side
Doorways	A water-stop under the door where the membrane ends

Hobs and nib walls

- A shower hob must be built from material that moisture cannot affect, such as concrete or masonry. It must not be built from timber ([BRANZ](#)).
- The membrane runs continuously from the shower floor, up the inside face of the hob and over the top, with each change of angle reinforced.
- A nib wall inside the shower area is treated as a shower wall. The membrane covers every face within the extents in the table above, including the top and the exposed end, with each corner bandaged.
- Fixings for a glass screen that go through the membrane on a hob or nib wall must be sealed, because any penetration made after waterproofing breaks the system.

Plumbing, drainage and hot water

- 11. Hot water must be no hotter than 50°C at the tap.** This applies to basins, baths and showers installed on or after 2 November 2024 ([building.govt.nz](https://www.building.govt.nz)). The limit is usually met with a tempering valve. Stored hot water must still be kept at 60°C or above to control legionella.
- 12. Water supply and waste plumbing must follow clauses G12 and G13.** Supply pipework, wastes, traps and vents must be installed to an Acceptable Solution, which now includes the AS/NZS 3500:2021 plumbing standards ([BRANZ](https://www.branz.org.nz)). Copper-alloy fittings in contact with drinking water are limited to 0.25% lead.

Plumbing and drainage in detail

Water supply pipework

Pipes and fittings must not contaminate drinking water, and must be a material accepted under [G12/AS1](#).

Pipe material	Hot water	Cold water	Notes
Copper	Yes	Yes	Long-established and rigid
Cross-linked polyethylene (PEX)	Yes	Yes	Flexible, so fewer joints inside walls
Polybutylene (PB)	Yes	Yes	Must be protected from sunlight
Polypropylene (PP-R)	Yes	Yes	Must be protected from sunlight
Polyethylene (PE)	No	Yes	Cold supply only
uPVC	No	Limited	Used for wastes and drains, not hot water

- Supply pipes to bathroom fixtures are typically 10 mm to 20 mm, sized to the water pressure and the fixture.
- Each fixture must receive enough flow: at least 0.1 litres per second at a basin or shower, and 0.3 litres per second at a bath.
- Pressure at a fixture must be at least 30 kPa, and static pressure no more than 500 kPa.
- An isolating valve is required where the supply enters the home, so the water can be shut off.
- A hand-held bidet hose is a high contamination hazard and needs an air gap or a reduced pressure zone device to stop water flowing back into the supply.

Hot water

- The cylinder stores water at 60°C or hotter to control legionella.
- A tempering valve blends in cold water so that no more than 50°C reaches the basin, bath or shower.

Waste pipes

Minimum waste pipe sizes come from [G13/AS1](#).

Fixture	Minimum waste pipe diameter
Basin	32 mm
Shower	40 mm
Bath	40 mm
Floor waste	40 mm
Toilet	80 mm

- Waste pipes must slope so they drain fully: at least 1:20 for a 32 mm pipe, 1:40 for pipes up to 65 mm, and 1:60 for pipes up to 100 mm ([BRANZ Level](#)).
- Every fixture needs a trap that keeps a water seal of at least 25 mm, which stops sewer gas entering the room. The trap must sit within 1.2 m of the fixture outlet.
- Vent pipes must rise continuously to the open air. Where an air admittance valve is used instead, it must sit at least 100 mm above the trap it serves.
- Accepted waste pipe materials include PVC, copper, polyethylene and polypropylene.

Order of work

The plumber roughs in the supply and waste pipes before the walls are lined, and they must be in their final position before waterproofing. Fixtures are connected and sealed to the finished floor and walls after tiling.

Electrical

13. Sockets, switches and lights must respect the wet-area zones. The wiring rules (AS/NZS 3000) set zones around baths, showers and basins that limit what can be installed there. Fittings in splash zones need a suitable water-resistance (IP) rating, and bathroom circuits need RCD protection. Your electrician confirms the exact positions for your layout ([trade guide](#)).

Electrical in detail

The distances below are from WorkSafe's [electrical code of practice for domestic wiring \(NZECP 51\)](#). Zones are measured from the fixture, and they stop at the walls of the room.

Zone	Where it is	Sockets	Light fittings
Zone 0	Inside the bath or shower base	Not allowed	12 V fittings made for immersion only (IPX7)
Zone 1	Above the bath, or within 1.2 m of the shower's fixed plumbing connection, up to 2.25 m high	Not allowed	Splash-proof (IPX4)
Zone 2	A further 0.6 m beyond Zone 1, up to 2.25 m high	Shaver units, or sockets inside a cupboard, with RCD protection	Splash-proof (IPX4)
Zone 3	A further 2.4 m beyond Zone 2	Allowed with RCD protection	No special rating

Distances from basins and taps

- No socket may be installed within 0.15 m of the inside rim of a hand basin, or within 0.4 m above it.
- For a tub holding more than 45 litres, those distances increase to 0.5 m from the rim and 1.0 m above it.
- No socket or switch may be installed within 0.3 m of the bathroom floor.
- Switches are not allowed in Zone 0. In Zones 1 and 2 they must be rated for the zone.

Protection

- New lighting and socket circuits need an RCD rated at 30 milliamps, which cuts the power if current leaks to earth.
- Heated towel rails and their switches must be positioned and rated for the zone they sit in.

Your electrician confirms the final positions against the current wiring rules (AS/NZS 3000) for your layout.

Ventilation and glass

14. A bathroom with a shower or bath must have an extractor fan. The fan and its ducting must move at least 25 litres of air per second and exhaust to the outside, not into the roof space. An opening window does not replace the fan ([G4/AS1, fifth edition, in effect from 28 July 2025](#)).

15. Shower screens, shower doors and bath enclosures must be safety glass. Glass that people could fall against must meet NZS 4223 Part 3 under clause F2. Frameless hinged or pivot shower doors need toughened safety glass at least 6 mm thick ([F2/AS1](#)). Safety glass carries a [permanent mark](#) you can check.

Ventilation in detail

- The 25 litres per second applies to the fan with its ducting attached. A long or kinked duct reduces what a fan delivers, so the fan is chosen for the installed duct run, not the figure on the box.
- The duct must end outside the building. Venting into the roof space moves the moisture to the framing and insulation.
- A bathroom with a window still needs the fan. The window rule is separate: openable window area of at least 5% of the floor area.
- Where the home relies on extract ventilation, the bathroom door is undercut by 20 mm so replacement air can enter.
- In a rental home, the [Healthy Homes ventilation standard](#) also applies. A new bathroom fan must have a fan and duct diameter of at least 120 mm, or an exhaust capacity of at least 25 litres per second, and must vent outside.

Glass in detail

The glass type depends on how the panel is held ([F2/AS1](#)).

Glass panel	Requirement
Framed shower screen or bath enclosure	Grade A safety glass
Panel with one unframed edge	Toughened safety glass, at least 5 mm thick
Frameless hinged or pivot door	Toughened safety glass, at least 6 mm thick
Other bathroom glazing within 1500 mm of the floor	Grade A safety glass

- Every safety glass panel carries a permanent mark, usually etched in a corner, that the installer, the owner and the council can check.
- Your glazier sizes the glass to the current glazing standard, NZS 4223 Part 3, which sets thickness by panel size and fixing method.

Paperwork to keep when the job is finished

Document	Who provides it	When it applies
Code compliance certificate	Your council	Consented work. The owner applies as soon as the work is complete, and the council has 20 working days to decide (building.govt.nz)
Electrical Certificate of Compliance	Electrician	Any fixed wiring work
Waterproofing sign-off and product details	Membrane applicator	Any tiled shower or membrane floor
Plumber's licence details	Plumber	All plumbing and drainage work

All residential building work also carries implied warranties under the Building Act for up to 10 years, and the builder must fix defects that appear within 12 months of completion ([building.govt.nz](https://www.building.govt.nz)).