

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

By Joseph P. Guzzo



This is the story about a bathtub. A very special tub designed for the elderly and disabled. Thus, is the good part of the story.

You may have seen these tubs advertised on television, there are different companies and designs, but most have a door in order to walk in and are taller than a regular tub with a high seat. They have grab bars and come with a variety of water jets for hydro therapy. Controls are easy to reach and simple to use. Everything about the tub was designed to make life a little easier for the elderly and disabled. I think it is a good idea and a great product. Unfortunately there is a down side to this story.

Since the product is marketed for the elderly, that will be the customer base. Mix in infomercials, a charismatic, sweet talking, high pressure the discount ends today salesperson, well I think you get the picture. Not that all elderly people are gullible or naive, on the contrary. Many seniors feel they can still make their own decisions, and don't have to seek advice or ask permission from family or friends for everything they do. For some that's fine, for others however it could be unfortunate. Especially when it comes to spending large sums of money, yes this is the bad part of the story. The price for these tubs is astronomical. And now that the wonderful salesperson is on a first name basis with Grandma, while we're at it lets throw in some extras, a new toilet a new vanity, new tile, etc, etc. I have seen the contracts, we are talking megabucks. Don't worry though, they accept credit cards. But that's not the worst part.

One to go, yes it has to be the ugly part of the story. I have been involved with three (3) installations of this type of tub in my jurisdiction. All three involved elderly homeowners, all had very expensive contracts, and at each job all work was performed by unlicensed, unskilled workers without any permits. And as you can see by the photos that accompany this article, the workmanship was atrocious, and the entire job had to be done over by professionals. Two of the installations involved unmarked vans with out of state plates. There were two workers, I questioned the one that understood English, and asked how many of these installations they have done. The answer... many all across the State.

I have notified the Plumbing Board, and so far have signed three (3) complaints. I would ask all contractors, and inspectors to be aware of these tubs. And as I have said before, it is a good product and has a noble purpose. However, our plumbing industry strives for conformance, and professionalism, and will not accept anything less. The laws and regulations we uphold are designed to protect the consumer. In this case it is one of the more vulnerable consumers.