

## Outside Showers

By, Joseph P. Guzzo

As Summer approaches, “thank you lord,” we all look forward to more pleasant warm weather activities. Golf, boating, gardening, just to name a few. And for many a favorite is going to the beach. Prior to becoming the Plumbing Inspector for three (3) ocean front Towns I was not very familiar with these beautiful surroundings other than visiting to enjoy the beaches and boating. Today that’s all I see. In the beginning I discovered an unexplained phenomenon called the outside shower. At first I didn’t think to much of it, and I’m sure I have seen them before but just did not pay any attention to them. After all what harm could come from an outside shower? Until I started to receive complaints and decided to take a closer look.



The outside shower is a seemingly innocent apparatus meant to be used for rinsing off purposes in beach areas. However, the fact is that outside showers are more commonly used as a shower for bathing. I would estimate that 90% of the outside showers I have seen, and I have seen many in the fourteen years I have been a Plumbing Inspector, are not used for rinsing off purposes at all. Most have enclosures with doors or curtains, soap, shampoo, towels, etc., and many are miles away from any beach. What started off as an innocent apparatus for rinsing off has become a plumbing fixture that discharges human waste on to the ground causing pollution and the potential for the spread of germs and disease.

I recall the first time I received a complaint about an outside shower. A home owner called and said that soapy water was running from her neighbors driveway into her yard creating puddles of soapy water. She did not want to cause problems with her neighbor and asked if I would look into it. So the next day I went to the house, as I approached and walked up the driveway there was a small river of soapy water running down the driveway. The trail led to an enclosed outside shower in use. I announced that I was there, and the person said “I’ll be right out, I’m in the shower.” Later I requested an explanation. The owner said that although they had a shower in the house, the outside shower was their primary shower in the summer because they enjoyed taking showers outside. I ordered the owner to hire a plumber and connect the shower to the sanitary drainage system, and to bring the shower into compliance with the code.

Once a plumber called and asked what section of the code covered outside showers. I told him facetiously, “the same section that covers outside kitchen sinks.” The fact is that outside showers are not covered in our code. However all plumbing fixtures are regulated under 248 C.M.R., and showers must be installed in conformance with section 2.10, 8, a,b,c,d,e, in regards to product approval, size, materials, controls, water temperature, and safety. So if the argument is that an outside shower is not a plumbing fixture then we must refer to section 2.05, 15 ***Connections to Plumbing System Required. All plumbing***

***fixtures, drains, and appurtenances which are used to receive or discharge liquid waste or sewage shall be properly connected to the drainage system of the building or premises in accordance with the requirements of 248 C.M.R.***

It is amazing to me how many people trivialize the use of outside showers. I have some photographs and I would ask the skeptics to take a closer look. One shows a fully enclosed shower with soap, shampoo, shaving cream, a razor, toothpaste, and a toothbrush. Would you want your children playing in a yard next to this shower? Or worse, what if you had well water? The waste could be seeping into your supply of drinking water.

So is there a place for outside showers? Probably but we must use common sense. The problem is that common sense will tell me the rinsing off theory just doesn't hold water "if you will." After all, how many people are going to take a shower after they had just taken a shower? Perhaps we should add a section in the code detailing the installation and use of outside showers. In the mean- time remember our motto, "***The Plumber Protects The Health Of The Nation.***"