

CHANGES TO E3/AS1 INTERNAL MOISTURE BUILDING CODE FOR FINISHES TO FLOORS

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As of 5th November new changes will come into effect regarding common flooring product types (e.g. timber, laminate, vinyl planks) used in kitchens, laundries, bathrooms and toilet areas where a building consent for new or refurbished work is required.

Apart from

- (1) Slab-on-grade concrete that is steel trowelled finished; Used in a laundry within a garage or a building with sanitary facilities
- (2) Ceramic and Stone; the other
- (3) **Accepted solution** for a flooring finish in these areas is integrally waterproof sheet material (e.g. vinyl) with welded seams and edges sealed or coved. The finish must be impervious and easily cleaned.

The area extends to the doorway and all walls of the room, or **at least 1.5 metres from all sanitary fixtures or appliances in open plan rooms.**

Timber, laminates and vinyl planks may still be used **however** these flooring finish types will now need to be specified and approved as an **Alternative solution.**

The **Functional requirement** given in the clause E3.2 is the “building must be constructed to avoid the likelihood of -

- (a) Fungal growth or the accumulation of contaminants on linings and other building elements; and
- (b) Free water overflow penetrating to an adjoining household unit; and
- (c) Damage to building elements being caused by the presence of moisture”.

Definitions

The definition given of the meaning impervious is a floor finish “which does not allow the passage of moisture”.

The affected areas are defined as having a **sanitary fixing** (e.g. toilet, sink, shower or bath) or **sanitary appliance** (e.g. washing machine or dishwasher).

There are two situations that need consideration when choosing flooring finishes.

1. **Containment** - water from **Accidental over flow** from a sanitary fixture that “could damage an adjoining household unit or other property”.
2. **Watersplash** - “water can penetrate behind or under floor finishes in situations where watersplash occurs regularly (such as around shower enclosures or the fronts of built-in baths), unless these edges are sealed or coved.”

Criteria for an Alternative solution

The comment box included under section 3.1.1 **Floors** (under section 3.0 Watersplash) reads that “other floor finishes may also be capable of satisfying the performance for impervious and easily cleaned, if installed in a manner that prevents gaps or cracks within the finish and at any parts of its perimeter that are exposed to water splash, and/or if the surface is sealed with a suitable durable coating”.

Demonstrating that a product/install has met this criteria for an Alternative solution (as part of the Building consent process)

Alternative solutions are not new and Councils will have a process to work through. Des Molloy (former BRANZ Presenter and Technical Writer 2007 article) provides guidelines on the consent process for Alternative solutions. In brief there are a number of various headings. Examples that could assist with alternative floor finish solutions are as follows:

- ✓ **Comparison with a product Accepted by a Building Consent Authority** - documents may have been previously accepted by a Building Consent Authority.
- ✓ **Trade literature** - the manufacturer’s literature may contain technical data that supports the proposal.
- ✓ **In-Service history** - proof the proposed material has been used in a similar application on a similar site.
- ✓ **Expert evidence** - collaborative expert support for the proposal.

The complete article by Des Molloy can be viewed on the following link.

<https://www.buildmagazine.org.nz/index.php/articles/show/alternative-solutions>