plumbing

Definition: plumbing from Processing Water, Wastewater, Residuals, and Excreta for Health and Environmental Protection: An Encyclopedic Dictionary

All the elements of water supply inside a building and wastewater removal from it: pipes, fixtures, fixture traps, etc.; the installation of these elements.

Summary Article: plumbing
from The Columbia Encyclopedia

piping systems inside buildings for water supply and sewage. The Romans had a highly developed plumbing system; water was brought to Rome by aqueducts and distributed to homes in lead pipes—hence the name plumbing from the Latin word plumbum for lead. During the Middle Ages, however, plumbing became almost nonexistent. In fact, London’s first water system after the Middle Ages (c.1515) consisted partly of the rehabilitated Roman system; the rest was patterned after it. Modern plumbing began in the early 1800s, when steam engines became capable of supplying water under pressure and cheap cast iron pipes could be supplied to carry it. The common materials used today in water supply pipes are steel, copper, brass, plastic, and lead. Plumbing for sewage is made of cast iron, steel, asbestos cement, copper, and plastic. Water pressure is usually insufficient to supply the needs of tall apartment and office buildings; in such cases storage tanks are installed on the roof, into which a pump lifts water. The water then flows through the piping system of the building by gravity. Smaller buildings may have a pneumatic tank for the same purpose. The tank is partly filled with air, which is compressed when water is pumped in so that it will force water through the pipes. Sewage and drain systems typically have a trap, often a loop-shaped section of pipe, to seal off vapors in the pipes from the rest of the building. Vent pipes lead these vapors to the outside of the building; they also eliminate any suction in the piping and thus prevent the siphoning of water from traps when a nearby fixture discharges. In the 1970s and 80s flexible polybutylene plumbing was widely installed in standard and mobile homes. When unprecedented numbers of these plastic pipes began leaking because of exposure to chlorine and other chemicals in tap water, homeowners brought class-action lawsuits against the manufacturers, which were settled in 1995 for hundreds of millions of dollars.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA


The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018

https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/plumbing
APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA