

# 50plus Handyman



## Home Networking

**50plus Handyman director Roger Runswick investigates plumbing disasters and how to avoid them.**

With a summer leaving the UK alternatively under several feet of water or on the verge of a full-scale drought we take a look at plumbing disasters and how best to avoid them. Firstly the edited high lights of two recent calls to the 50plus Handyman booking lines.

### *The waiting game*

Customer - I have a bulge in my kitchen ceiling. It's been there for a while but now it's getting bigger and there's been water dripping from it and this morning it's dripping a lot faster.

Yes Madam: what is on top of the kitchen?

Customer: 'the bathroom'.

Madam; can you turn your water off?

Customer: 'I think so'.

Madam. Do it now and then call us back.

A couple of hours later....'Hello? 50plus Handyman? Can you repair holes in ceilings?'

### *A bad valve day*

Customer: I was trying to repair a ball valve.

Yes Sir. How can we help you?

Customer: 'Well my internal stop-cock was stuck so I turned of the water in the street.'

Yes Sir, quite sensible. But how can we help?

Customer: I think I turned off the wrong stopcock. When I took off the ball valve off the water wouldn't stop.

Oh dear! What's the current position?

Customer: Well I jammed the ball valve, ran outside and now everything is turned off but I'm not sure what to do and my neighbour has no water.

Have you tried the other stop cock sir?

Customer: Well I did but now it's stuck

We're on our way Sir.

So we can all chuckle in retrospect, not least because the insurance company's usually pay up (but not in the case of street stop cocks. They are the Water Company's and they may charge you). But in these albeit rather extreme cases either not waiting before taking action or testing before starting would have avoided disaster. So what else can one do?

In the first instance do not let systems deteriorate. 50plus Handyman sees two very common problems, which end up costing the customer far more than they would have done if addressed at an early stage.

- (i) Leaking showers. These are a perennial problem. The biggest issue is the old style all to flexible plastic shower trays mounted on upper floors. The tray moves with people's weight. Sealant is dislodged or traps/pipes become loose and before long there's a damp patch on the ceiling below. Don't leave it too long or don't use the shower. It won't fix itself. And if changing the tray fit a stone cast type.
- (ii) A dripping tap can easily fill a bath full of water in a day (every day). If you are on a meter it's costing you money. It is also costing us all money as water 'down the drain' has to be stored, pumped and the infrastructure paid for. A tap washer or new tap insert is a good investment and the sooner it's changed the less it will cost, particularly in hard water areas where the constantly running water will erode the tap base.

And finally, a darker plumbing tale. A customer reported not have any water coming out of a bath tap. Every other tap was OK. Our intrepid 50plus Handyman turns off the customer's hot water and having ruled out more obvious causes dismantles the tap. What's that in there? Some careful extraction later and we have a (rather dead) bat. How did it get there? The tank was covered. We'll never know, but next time the water's running slowly, perhaps better to just shrug and call the experts - quickly.

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