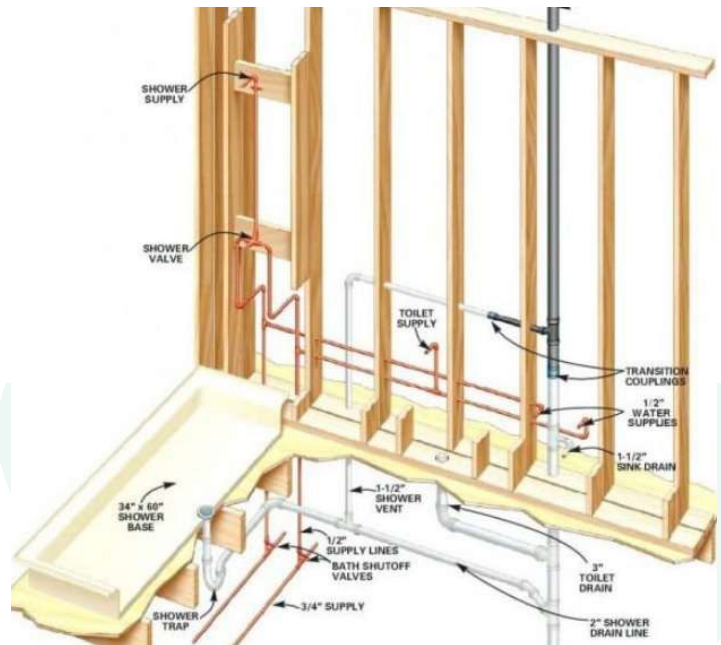


Drying Behind or Under Shower and Tub Surrounds

When there is a water supply line leak behind or under a shower or tub, it might be possible to dry affected drywall and framing from the other side of the tile or fiberglass surround by coming in from behind or under it. Remember, to dry wet materials, we just need to provide hot, dry air to the water and be able to confirm the wet materials are left in a state that won't promote microbial growth. If the supply line leak is in an exterior wall, it may be necessary to open the surround if we can't get air to that area from either side of the surround. Most times, if the leak is in the exterior wall behind the surround, the plumber will have to open it up to repair the leak.



First, identify if there is access to where the water loss originated from an adjacent interior wall so we don't have to remove the surround. Many times, the supply lines are in an interior wall we can access from an adjacent room. Then, open a small inspection port at the bottom of the wall since moisture will migrate to the bottom of the wall cavity due to gravity.

Once we identify what is wet, we can duct hot, dry air from our dehumidifier into the wall, while taking daily penetrating moisture meter readings inside the wall with a moisture probe attachment. See photo below for how to access under a tub surround. If removing one tile, be sure to not crack the tile so it can be reinstalled.



If you are in a state where there are shear walls on the adjacent wall, you will need to consult your local building codes before drilling holes in shear walls. I always tell restorers we can get hot, dry air into very small holes, and the hardest part might be obtaining good photos of our final moisture content readings to ensure we reached our dry targets. It will be much easier and less expensive to repair drywall instead of a shower or tub surround. The photos above are from a previous home I lived in in Texas, where I needed to access under my ceramic tile tub surround to dry under my tub. I simply cut a one-foot square of drywall out of the adjacent bedroom wall and once dry installed a simple plastic cover so it would be possible to access under the tub for any future repairs. I was also able to remove one tile to access where the water line needed to be repaired and reinstalled with matching grout.

MEET ED

Instructor Ed Jones has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, has the title of Master Water Restorer, is an Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC)–approved instructor, and has served on the S500–2021 consensus body committee to develop the most recent standard.



Happy Drying! Ed

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