

# North America Bathroom News

## January 2009



International Market Strategy

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## Australia: Research on the Australian Bathroom Market

BRG CONSULT is pleased to announce the completion of its first report on the Australian market for bathroom products. This 275-page detailed report on the Australian market is now available straight away.

Products covered in this report include:

- Baths (Cast Iron, Steel, Synthetic)
- Shower Trays/Bases
- Ceramic Sanitary Ware (and Plastic Alternatives)
- Faucets, Taps and Mixers
- Shower Enclosures, Shower Cubicles and Bath Screens
- Hydromassage Baths

The report analyzes the following:

- Market Trends
- 2007 Market and 2008-2012 Forecasts
- Average Prices and Values
- Product Segmentation
- Distribution Analysis
- End Use Segment
- Manufacturers Market Shares

as well as covers:

- Background Information on Australia
- Distribution Section
- Australian Manufacturers Profiles
- Australian Distributors Profiles.

For more information please contact Marie Vermeulen at BRG CONSULT NORTH AMERICA ([mvermeulen@brgconsult.com](mailto:mvermeulen@brgconsult.com)).

Source: BRG Consult North America



## USA: Housing Starts Plunge 18.9% to Record Low

16 December 2008 - Single-family building permits fall 12.3% in November, setting 27-year low.

WASHINGTON -- U.S. home builders threw in the towel in November, slashing construction of new dwellings far below the worst levels seen in 50 years, according to Commerce Department data released Tuesday.

New starts dropped an eye-popping 18.9% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 625,000, the lowest since the Commerce Department began keeping records in 1959. According to similar records kept elsewhere, it's the slowest pace of construction in the post-World War II period.

Starts were far lower than the 740,000 that economists surveyed by MarketWatch had been looking for. The monthly percentage drop was the most since a 26% decline in March 1984.

"This is bad news for the economy, of course, but it is best viewed as good news because what is sorely needed in the housing market is a decrease in supply, which now looks extremely likely in 2009," wrote Tony Crescenzi, chief bond market strategist for Miller Tabak & Co.

"The markets need to clear," said Mike Schenk, economist for the Credit Union National Association. "But this is bad news; it'll be a painful process and many more people will be out of work."

In a separate report Tuesday, the Labor Department said the consumer price index fell a seasonally adjusted 1.7% in November, the lowest since the government first reported seasonally adjusted CPI in 1947. In non-adjusted terms, the 1.9% drop was the largest decline since January 1932.

Housing starts for September and October were revised lower. In October, starts were revised to a record-low annual rate of 771,000, down from 791,000 previously.

Building permits -- a separate, less-volatile measure of new construction -- fell 15.6% last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 616,000, also a record low.

And permits for single-family homes, considered by many analysts to be the key number in the report, fell 12.3% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 412,000, marking a 27-year low.

Starts of single-family homes dropped 16.9% to an annual rate of 441,000, also a record low.

Housing starts have now fallen 47% in the past year and 73% from the peak. Building permits are down 48% in the past year and down 72% from the peak.

Builders are frantically cutting back their production of new homes, trying to work off a mammoth glut of unsold inventory. The more builders cut production, the sooner the market can recover.

The number of homes completed in November rose to an annual rate of 1.08 million units, up 3.3%. The number of homes under construction fell 2.7%, to an annual rate of 857,000.

The report shows new construction has been battered again by the credit squeeze in capital markets, which has dried up financing just as the economic downturn accelerated and pushed demand lower. Moreover, rising numbers of foreclosures of existing homes are competing against new construction



for the few buyers remaining.

Indeed, the National Association of Home Builders said Monday that its builder sentiment index remained at a record low level in December, signaling continued weakness in construction.

The government cautions that its monthly housing data are volatile and subject to large sampling and other statistical errors. In most months, the government can't be sure whether starts increased or decreased.

In November, the standard error for starts was plus or minus 8.9%. Large revisions are common.

It can take four months for a new trend in housing starts to emerge from the data. In the past four months, housing starts have averaged 769,000 on an annualized basis, down from a pace of 1.27 million in the four months through last November.

In all of 2007, 1.355 million homes were started.

Source: MarketWatch



## Canada: Canadian Housing Starts Moderate in November 2008

10 December 2008 -- The seasonally adjusted annual rate of housing starts was 172,000 units in November, down from 211,800 units in October, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

“The decrease in November housing starts can be attributed in part to the volatile multiple starts segment,” said Bob Dugan, Chief Economist at CMHC’s Market Analysis Centre. “Still, housing starts in November remain consistent with our forecast which calls for more moderate activity of 212,000 units this year and 178,000 units next year.”

“Note that at the beginning of the new millennium, Canada posted strong housing start levels given a pent-up demand that existed then. Over the last few years, this excess demand gradually decreased and our forecast for 2008 and 2009 reflects this new reality with housing starts, more aligned with long run demographic demand.”

The seasonally adjusted annual rate of urban starts decreased 21.6% to 144,800 units in November. Urban multiple starts moderated 29.1% to 81,700 units, while urban single starts eased 9.0% to 63,100 units in November.

November’s seasonally adjusted annual rate of urban starts moderated in all regions of Canada. Urban starts declined to 17,900 units in British Columbia, 23,500 units in the Prairies, 54,700 units in Ontario, 41,100 units in Quebec, and 7,600 units in the Atlantic region.

Rural starts were estimated at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 27,200 units in November.

For the first 11 months of 2008, actual starts in rural and urban areas combined moderated by an estimated 7.6 per cent, compared to the same period last year. Year-to-date actual starts in urban areas have decreased by an estimated 3.9% over the same period in 2007.

Actual urban single starts for the January to November period of 2008 were 18.4% lower than they were a year earlier while urban multiple starts were up by 8.6% over the same period.

Note: All starts figures in this release, other than actual starts, are seasonally adjusted annual rates (SAAR) – that is, monthly figures adjusted to remove normal seasonal variation and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

Source: Journal of Commerce



## USA: Forecasters Share Predictions for Economy's Outlook in 2009

5 December 2008, WASHINGTON - It may come as a surprise, given all the bad news of late, but the U.S. economy is expected to emerge from the recession sometime around mid-2009.

Until that happens, the economy will remain mired in one of the deepest and longest downturns the nation has seen in decades.

If the recession continues past the spring, as many economists predict, it will be the most prolonged one since the Great Depression. Employers are expected to continue to shed jobs at a rapid pace. Consumers will pull back spending. Businesses will cancel equipment purchases. Unsold, empty homes will dot city blocks.

However, once the massive amount of fiscal stimulus currently being crafted by lawmakers and aggressive action by the Federal Reserve kicks in, the economy is expected to improve, according to several economists and business owners.

"We all just need to hang on," says Allen Sinai, president of Decision Economics, an economic consulting firm. "By late in the year, the economy will be moving up, and 2010 should be a recovery year."

OLE managing partner Javier Escobedo is counting on that.

Business at his New York-based advertising company with a focus on the Hispanic retail market has dropped significantly since Thanksgiving. In the past few months Escobedo has not renewed contracts for about 20 people he employed on a project basis.

He's looking for things to pick up in the third quarter. But "the highflying numbers in terms of revenues in my business" won't likely come for two to three years, he says.

Unknown is how rapidly the economy will rebound once the turnaround takes hold. Some say it could come roaring back.

"We're going to throw so much at it in terms of fiscal and monetary stimulus that we will turn it around, and it will have legs," Comerica Bank chief economist Dana Johnson says.

Others are gloomier. They expect continued job losses and depressed consumer and business spending throughout the year because of tight credit conditions. The resulting damage to the consumer and business psyche will change the very nature of the economy for years to come. "The first six months of '09 will be very painful, the second six months will just be painful, and 2010 will be uncomfortable," Moody's Economy.com chief economist Mark Zandi says. Predicting the economy's future is particularly tough this year, given rapid changes in the economy and financial markets, and uncertainty about what course of action Congress and President-elect Barack Obama's administration will take to boost the economy in the new year, says Conrad DeQuadros, senior economist at consulting firm RDQ Economics.

"When it comes to all of these forecasts, there is a lot less clarity than usual," he says.

A look at five key areas of the economy to watch in 2009:



## 1. Jobs

The outlook for jobs is probably the worst aspect of the economy in 2009. Employers are expected to trim payrolls until the end of the year, shoving the jobless rate above 8%, according to forecasts from Barclays Capital, John Hancock Financial Services, Citigroup, Mission Residential, Wachovia and National City.

That excludes those who have given up on finding jobs or who work part time because they can't get full-time work. The jobless rate was 6.7% in November, the highest in 15 years.

Job losses could be particularly brutal in the first half of the year. Last month, 60% of U.S. CEOs said they expected to cut workers in the next six months, according to the Business Roundtable. A number of companies, including Bank of America and United Airlines, have already announced layoffs for early 2009.

Even after the economy stabilizes, job losses will probably continue for a while. That's common in recovery periods as wary businesses await more evidence that the economy is on solid footing. Employers cut jobs for nearly a year after the 2001 recession ended, for example. "I don't know what is coming, so what we are trying to do is remain nimble and lean," says Andrew Field, CEO of Livingston, Mont.-based PrintingForLess.com. He employs 162 people full time, down from nearly 200 early in 2008.

Bright spots: The health care and education sectors will keep adding jobs.

## 2. Housing

The long-depressed housing market is widely expected to hit a bottom in 2009. But the rebound will likely be very slow and gradual, given rising unemployment and a sluggish economy.

"Housing will, to a certain extent, lead in this recovery," Wachovia Securities senior economist Mark Vitner says.

But initially, that won't be because the market is actually strengthening, as has been the case in previous post-recessionary periods, he says. "What gives us positive numbers in the second half of 2009 ... is that housing stops falling," Vitner says.

Housing construction, which has fallen off a cliff since peaking in early 2006, will flatten in mid-2009, he says. Wachovia anticipates the decline in sales of new and previously owned homes will bottom out around the same time.

While sales and construction are expected to flatten or edge higher, it's more murky as to when prices will stop falling.

The timing of the price recovery depends, in part, on how strongly state and federal governments step in to stop foreclosures, Vitner and other economists say. Wells Fargo senior economist Scott Anderson argues prices won't rebound until 2010 because home sellers will keep cutting prices to compete with banks selling foreclosed homes.



### **3. Consumer Spending**

Consumer confidence has taken an enormous hit in recent months, and Americans are expected to be tight with money early in the year, then slowly increase their spending.

The massive loss of wealth from the decline in stock and home prices has taken a huge toll on U.S. households. Net worth was down more than 11% in the July-September quarter from a year earlier, according to the Federal Reserve. When people are less wealthy — even on paper — they tend to spend less. And Americans finally are building up their savings — after years of spending more than they earned.

"When unemployment is high and confidence is low, people accumulate a little bit of a nest egg," National City chief economist Richard DeKaser says.

Retailers are bracing for the worst, with the most optimistic suggesting that the downward slide in sales will stop or at least slow in the second half of the year. But they're not taking any chances. Nearly all chain stores have scaled back plans to open stores. Some, including SEARS and ANN TAYLOR, are expected to close stores well into next year and beyond. The liquidation company HILCO APPRAISAL SERVICES recently predicted that 14,000 retail stores of all sizes will close in 2009.

Auto sales in the USA are expected to be even worse in 2009 than in 2008, reflecting the lower sales volume that hit at the tail end of this year. Estimates range from 11.5 million to 12.5 million for 2009, a far cry from the 17 million-a-year sales level in 2001, the Detroit 3 automakers said in testimony this month as they sought a federal bailout.

Consumer spending accounts for over two-thirds of U.S. economic activity. DeKaser and analysts at Barclays Capital, UCLA and John Hancock all expect spending to increase in the April-June quarter. One thing that will help is the sharp drop in prices of commodities, particularly gas. "It's one of the good pieces of news that's out there," says IHS Global Insight chief economist Nariman Behravesh.

### **4. Business Spending**

Businesses are expected to cut spending dramatically through much of 2009. A number of economists, including those at Citi, UCLA, National City and Wachovia, don't expect business investment, which accounts for about one-tenth of U.S. economic activity, to decline through 2009.

According to a survey of 679 chief financial officers by Duke University and CFO Magazine this month, U.S. businesses expect to cut capital spending by more than 10% in the next 12 months, a sharp deterioration from September, when the CFOs expected business investment to increase slightly.

John Graham, finance professor at Duke and director of the survey, says businesses are finding ways to repair existing machinery and buildings rather than replace equipment or move. They likely won't increase their spending until they see concrete evidence the economy is on the mend.

"Some people are doing it because the business is just not there," Graham says. "Other companies are potentially cutting back even as a precautionary measure."



Also holding back businesses is the lack of access or high cost of credit, Graham says. Robert Safro, president of LOGOmotion, a Bethesda, MD.-based company that creates marketing materials such as coffee mugs and tote bags for conferences and businesses, sees a great deal of caution from his clients.

Those planning meetings for late winter and early spring are either buying fewer or less-expensive items, or they're not buying at all. One client who usually spends about \$80,000 on a conference each year is spending half that. "I'm concerned," Safro says.

Robert Coen, director of forecasting at media-analysis firm Magna, predicts a 4.5% drop in ad spending to \$259 billion in 2009 on the heels of a 3.2% drop in 2008.

"A recovery in U.S. ad budgets will probably not get underway until 2010," he says. Another negative for 2009: there aren't any big ad-spending events such as the Olympics or national elections.

Declining business spending will hurt a number of industries but will be especially tough for the manufacturing sector. Nearly two-thirds of manufacturers expect revenue to be unchanged or lower in 2009 than 2008, a survey from the Institute for Supply Management found.

## **5. Prices**

Concerns about inflation are so 2008. In 2009, deflation worries are expected to dominate the pricing landscape.

With the economy in a slump, prices are falling for a variety of goods — prompting worries that the economy could sink into a deflationary spiral. Deflation is a broad, sustained decline in prices that is hard to stop once it takes hold.

If consumers expect prices to decline, they put off making purchases, thus crippling the already weak economy.

While many economists say the chances of deflation are remote, the Federal Reserve is taking no chances.

Tuesday, the Fed slashed interest rates to near zero and vowed to keep them low while also pledging to plow money into the financial system to unlock lending and boost the economy.

Concerns about deflation will make the Fed "all the more aggressive," says Comerica's Johnson, arguing that although price pressures are abating, the chance of outright deflation is remote.

Still, "That is going to be a risk for a while given the severity of the recession."

Source: USA Today



## USA: Recession Slows Migration in U.S.

23 December 2008 - The recession and housing bust have slowed migration throughout the U.S., keeping more Americans in place, according to Census Bureau data released Monday.

Such states as New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey are holding onto more of their residents, while some of the Sun Belt states accustomed to attracting new arrivals are seeing fewer.

The latest Census Bureau numbers cover the 12 months ending July 1, 2008. The period includes the first seven months of the recession, and shows how the economic downturn has already affected jobs and the flow of people.

U.S. migration typically slows during recessions because new jobs are the primary reason people move across state lines, according to the Pew Research Center. With the country on track to shed more than 2 million jobs this year, there are fewer reasons to move.

Falling home prices also have prompted many people to stay put, rather than risk losing money in a declining housing market.

"These previously high-cost areas, which used to spew out migrants during the easy-credit years, are now holding onto them because there's nowhere to go," said William Frey, a senior demographer at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

The long-term trend has been for Americans to leave Northeast and Midwest population centers for warmer, job-creating states in the Sunbelt and West. That movement has slowed, according to the Census. New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Connecticut had much higher growth rates last year than they did during the housing boom earlier this decade. Nevada and Arizona, which over the past few years vied to be the nation's fastest-growing state, saw their rates of growth decrease.

A similar dynamic is playing out in the South, where Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee benefited from migration during the housing boom. The most recent data show population growth slowing there, too.

Census Bureau data revealed fewer people are moving from state-to-state due to the recession and housing bust.

One of the starkest examples was Florida. The state has for decades absorbed retirees and wayward job seekers from cold Northern states. But the state has been hit hard by the housing bust. Over the 12-month period ending July 1, the Census reported the state had 9,300 fewer people moved there from other states than left. The state's population grew overall because of births and immigration.

The migration slowdown hasn't yet disrupted longer-term trends. People continue to leave the Northeast and Midwest for jobs and warmer weather in the West and South. Utah was the fastest-growing state last year, followed by Arizona, Texas and North Carolina.

But the slowed migration has significant political effect. The South and West are likely to continue to add congressional districts lost by the Northeast and Midwest after the 2010 congressional apportionment. But certain states may pick up fewer seats than anticipated before the recession, according to an instant analysis of census data by Election Data Services, a Washington, D.C.,



political-consulting firm.

Mr. Frey said the decrease in migration is notable for its breadth. The housing bust and the recession have slowed migration to fast-growing states in the Sun Belt and the West. Two states, Michigan and Rhode Island, lost population, with each state suffering unemployment rates greater than 9%.

"It's a very unique time for migration in the U.S. when you see both Michigan and Florida losing migrants," Mr. Frey said. "In the past, people would leave Michigan and go to Florida. Now they can't go to Florida."

The migration slowdown began last year, as the housing market worsened. Job growth was slowing and potential movers stayed in place. Now, the recession is also reducing international immigration. Between 2007 and 2008 immigration was down 10% from its average annual rate between 2000 and 2008, according to the Census data.

"Just as immigrants were attracted to the growing U.S. economy, their volume has diminished as the economy has slowed," said Kenneth M. Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

Source: The Wall Street Journal



## USA: Green Savings Start at Home by Going Blue

Washington, D.C. - Nov. 25, 2008. If you want to "go blue," you are not just limited to WaterSense labeled products for your home. Going blue for a whole home is now a reality with the first WaterSense labeled new home in Chapel Hill, N.C. The home meets EPA's WaterSense draft specification, includes water-efficient products inside and water-saving features and landscaping on the outside, and incorporates design features that save water.

"Through the WaterSense New Homes Pilot Program, we can lay a strong foundation for environmental progress," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. "As the program encourages installation of products that save water and money, homeowners are realizing first-hand the benefits of efficient water use."

Vanguard Homes, one of seven builders participating in the WaterSense New Homes Pilot Program, finished the home to meet EPA's draft new homes criteria for water efficiency and performance.

Homes built to the WaterSense draft specification are designed to use about 20% less water than conventional homes by including WaterSense labeled products and Energy Star qualified appliances, and using water-efficient features and practices. In turn, homeowners can reduce their water usage by more than 10,000 gallons per year and save on their energy bills.

Introduced in 2006, WaterSense is a partnership program sponsored by EPA that makes it easy for Americans to save water and protect the environment by identifying water-efficient products, services and soon, new homes. The WaterSense label can be found on toilets and bathroom faucets. Products that have earned the WaterSense label have been independently tested to meet water-efficiency specifications set by EPA. In 2007, WaterSense partners were responsible for labeling, selling and promoting more than 193,400 WaterSense labeled products, saving the United States more than 277 million gallons of water annually.

Source: EPA



## USA: Good News For Green Building

19 December 2008 -- Green building, or sustainable construction, is getting a lot of good press lately. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) recently released the first comprehensive report by a federal agency regarding acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining sustainable buildings.

“Sustainability Matters” ([www.gsa.gov/sustainable/design](http://www.gsa.gov/sustainable/design)) is a collection of case studies and industry best practices that address GSA’s sustainability initiatives and strategies at all stages of a building’s lifecycle.

“We want to be part of transforming the building industry so that ‘green’ is the only way of doing business,” said GSA’s Commissioner of Public Buildings David L. Winstead.

The GSA demonstrates how to create sustainable buildings by integrating energy-efficient and environmentally sound decisions and technologies into building designs. It uses the U.S. Green Buildings Council’s LEED rating system as a tool to evaluate and measure its achievement in sustainable design. The goals are to conserve resources and create more productive and healthier workplaces.

### Green Growth

According to McGraw-Hill Construction’s “Green Outlook 2009: Trends Driving Change” report, the U. S. green building market is accelerating at a dramatic rate — the value of green building construction starts was up five-fold from 2005 to 2008 (from \$10 billion to \$36-\$49 billion), and could triple by 2013, reaching \$96-\$140 billion. Drivers are growing public awareness, an increase in government regulations and recognition of bottom-line advantages.

“The business opportunities afforded by green building, even in the midst of a global economic crisis, are real and recognized by industry players,” said Harvey M. Bernstein, vice president of industry analytics, alliances and strategic initiatives, MCGRAW-HILL CONSTRUCTION. “Furthermore, green building has great potential to help tackle unemployment through green jobs, and can address other societal issues, such as creating healthier places where we live and work.”

U.S. Green Building Council members report green building to be less affected by the down market compared to non-green building, and homebuyers are willing to pay more for a green home. Perceived economic benefits are driving green building, including higher revenues, lower lifecycle costs and lower operating costs, but builders and buyers are also motivated by health benefits, new government regulation and pressure from global competition.

Source: Plumbing & Mechanical



## USA: ASA Ends Relationship with ISH North America

19 December 2008 - In a letter dated December 15, 2008, ASA informed Messe Frankfurt that the American Supply Association Board of Directors had voted to withdraw support and involvement from ISH North America.

“Long and serious consideration was given to this decision, and it included extensive input from our manufacturer members,” said Mike Adelizzi, ASA’s executive vice president. “While the original concept of ISH was to bring the PHCP and PVF industry together under one trade show banner, the result weakened the focus on the sponsoring associations. This loss of focus reduced the urgency to attend among people who had traditionally identified with a specific association. Attendance diminished and ISH didn’t realize the potential we all believed in when we joined forces.”

In addition, Adelizzi said that many of ASA’s manufacturer members clearly voiced their desire to end the partnership with ISH North America. “With the state of the economy the way it is today, a closer working partnership between the manufacturer and wholesaler has an even greater value than in years past,” continued Adelizzi. “ASA is placing a stronger emphasis on providing manufacturers and wholesalers a venue to fortify that working partnership and coupling it with critical information about what the future has in store for our industry. Those are the guiding principles that have led to the development of the agenda for NetworkASA 2009 and the introduction of the Industry Interchange program.”

In related news, Supply House Times has received word that PHCC also is no longer co-sponsoring the event.

### **ASA’s Industry Interchange**

ASA will be introducing the Industry Interchange, an innovative and exciting event that will replace the traditional industry trade show and conference booth format. “For a few years now, we’ve heard dissatisfaction about industry trade shows,” said Adelizzi. “Our Vendor Member Division (VMD) came out strongly this year in favor of developing a new way to connect with their customers and the Industry Interchange is it. What the Industry Interchange allows us to do is choose a theme and a format, hold the event and then have the option of redesigning the whole thing the next year.”

He continues, “We aren’t pigeon-holed into just a trade show, or just a conference booth program. This allows the VMD to react in a responsive way to changing needs and desires as to how vendors and their customers best connect. We’re very excited about this event and the potential it has to stay innovative for years to come.”

Source: Supply House Times



## UK: Crocodile Found Bathing in a Bathroom in London!

In a bizarre incident, a pest control manager was stunned to find a crocodile in a bathroom in London.

Steve North, a pest control manager, was carrying out door-to-door examination to advertise Southwark Council's service when he saw the 2ft long creature at an apartment's bathroom in Peckham.

When he quizzed about the crocodile, the apartment tenant revealed that he was looking after the crocodile for a friend.

"I followed him in. What I didn't expect was to be eyeballed by a 2ft long crocodile, happily lounging in the bath," the Telegraph quoted North as saying.

A team of animal control experts was called in soon afterwards, which then took it away.

Meanwhile, another pest control officer, Leslie Leonard, was asked to go to a home in Walworth, south London, to collect an unwanted guinea pig and a rabbit.

He, however, found more than one million cockroaches there.

Source: Reuters



## USA: PA. Woman Gets Stuck In Toilet, Sues KOHLER CO.

ALLENTOWN, PA. — A New Jersey woman is suing KOHLER CO. and a Pennsylvania sports bar and restaurant, saying she got stuck inside a toilet bowl for 20 minutes after the handicapped toilet seat she sat on cracked two years ago.

Kathleen Hewko of Delran Township, N.J., had hip surgery prior to the Nov. 19, 2006, incident and was re-injured when the seat cracked in half at Starters Pub in Lower Saucon Township, PA., “violently” dropping her into the bowl, according to the lawsuit, filed last month in U.S. District Court in Allentown. The story was reported by the Allentown Morning Call.

Hewko, who weighs 130 to 140 pounds, screamed for help before finally getting out, according to her attorney, John Cirrinicione of Philadelphia, who says the seat was defective.

“It’s not a question of her being an obese woman,” he said.

The suit names Starters and KOHLER CO., which the suit says made the toilet seat. Representatives from both companies said they couldn’t comment on the lawsuit.

The suit says Hewko, her husband, John, and son, Colin, were dining at the restaurant around 2 p.m. when Hewko went to the ladies’ room and ended up in the ceramic bowl. She says the plunge permanently injured her lower back, hip and thigh. It’s unclear exactly how Hewko got out of the toilet.

The lawsuit claims the restaurant knew there was a problem with the toilet seats and that another toilet seat had broken there earlier that week.

Hewko is seeking more than \$150,000 from both Starters and KOHLER CO. for pain and suffering, mental anguish and other damages. She’s also seeking attorney’s fees.

John Hewko is also seeking more than \$75,000 from the two parties for loss of consortium and companionship with his wife.

Source: [www.sheboyganpress.com](http://www.sheboyganpress.com)



## Uganda: 100 Arrested For Not Having Toilets

KAMPALA (Reuters) - Local authorities have arrested at least 100 Ugandans for failing to build toilets in their homes in the midst of a cholera epidemic that has killed 8 people and infected 164, state media reported Wednesday.

"We cannot watch as people die (of cholera)," northwestern Bulisa district administrator Norbert Turyahikayo told the New Vision daily, justifying the arrest of Ugandans found to have huts with no pit latrines Tuesday.

Police spokesman Hassan Kasinje told Reuters the building of homes without proper toilets was forbidden in Uganda, though he did not know of the arrests.

"It is illegal ... but it is not an arrestable offence. Whoever arrested them is wrong," he said. "A health officer is supposed to instruct them to build or they can be cautioned."

In September, 70 Ugandans in the east were seized for the same offence. Many in remote villages lack latrines.

Cholera epidemics spread by poor sanitation are common.

Source: Reuters



## USA: Doctor's Advice: Leave the Toilet Seat Up

5 December 2008 - One of the longest-running spousal debates may now be settled in favor of men and for the sake of little boys.

Leave the toilet seat up, some British doctors now say. The reason: a rising trend for heavy wooden and ornamental toilet seats to fall down onto the penises of unsuspecting (and just potty-trained) toddlers.

Dr. Joe Philip and his colleagues of Leighton Hospital, Crewe, in England detail such penis-crush injuries in the December issue of the journal *BJU International*. The team reports on four boys between the ages of 2 and 4 who were admitted to hospitals with injuries serious enough to require an overnight stay.

The doctors say the injuries have implications for holiday travel and at-home toilet safety for parents with male toddlers.

"As Christmas approaches many families will be visiting relatives and friends and their recently toilet-trained toddlers will be keen to show how grown-up they are by going to the toilet on their own," Philip said. "It is important that parents check out the toilet seats in advance, not to mention the ones they have in their own homes, and accompany their children if necessary."

The team found that all four toddlers had been potty trained and were using the toilet on their own when the incidents occurred. Each had lifted the toilet seat, which fell back down and crushed his penis. Three of the toddlers showed a build-up of fluid in the foreskin, but they were still able to urinate. The fourth had so-called glandular tenderness.

Luckily, the doctors say, the toddlers showed no injuries to the urethra (the tube in the penis that carries urine out) and no bleeding. All four toddlers were able to leave the hospital the next day.

To keep toddlers safe during their journey in the bathroom, the doctors suggest the following tips:

- \* Parents should consider using toilet seats that fall slowly and with reduced momentum, which would reduce the risk and degree of injury.
- \* Heavier toilet seats could be banned in houses with male infants.
- \* Households with male infants should consider leaving the toilet seat up after use, even though it contradicts the social norm of putting it down.
- \* Parents could educate their toddlers to hold the toilet seat up with one hand while urinating. During such a feat, parents should keep an eye on toddlers until the toddler can do this by himself.

"As any parent knows, toilet training can be a difficult time with any toddler," Philip said. "We are concerned that the growing trend of heavy toilet seats poses a risk not only to their health, but to their confidence."

Source: [www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com)