

# [***Why this year's Super Bowl is all about the bathrooms***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7W-BR41-DY7V-G001-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

February 3, 2024 Saturday 11:00 AM GMT

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**Length:** 1258 words

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**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

New York (CNN) &#8212; Nearly 65,000 football fans (some hoping to catch a glimpse of Taylor Swift) will soon descend upon Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas to attend the most-viewed American sporting event of the year.

Between the hot dogs, the beers and probably during Usher's greatest hits, the Super Bowl spectators will likely visit one of Allegiant's 297 restrooms. And the restrooms are ready.

In the summer of 2020, days before the new $2 billion stadium opened its doors to the public, building technicians flushed its nearly 1,430 toilets and urinals.

Simultaneously. It worked.

Figuring out how to keep restrooms functioning and lines short is tricky at a sporting event where people typically excuse themselves to use the restroom at the exact same point - right around halftime. So, increasingly, there's science to designing restrooms for thousands of people and laws and codes that cover it. Gender ***politics*** also comes into play.

The high cost of long lines

Long lines for the restroom are what architects call a "friction point," and, potentially, a costly one.

The average price for a Super Bowl ticket is hovering around $9,420. That means a 15-minute wait for the restroom could cost attendees about $600.

Delays also take away from the fan experience and cut into time that could be spent at the concession stands or gift shops and bars, limiting potential revenue for the stadium.

So what's the new science of stadium restrooms?

To start, states have building codes that require the installation of a certain number of restrooms per person. In Nevada, a stadium like Allegiant is [*required*](https://up.codes/viewer/nevada/ibc-2012/chapter/29/plumbing-systems#2902) to provide about one lavatory for every 120 men and one for every 60 women.

That's bare minimum, and most modern arenas go well beyond that, said Jonathan Emmett, a principal and design director at Gensler specializing in sports and entertainment venues.

"(Designers and architects) really had to step up our game in terms of the number of fixtures that are provided, the efficiency of those bathrooms and getting people in through those bathrooms as quickly as possible," said Emmett, who has helped design several football stadiums including Lincoln Financial Field, home of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Beyond the number of stalls, design can also improve restroom flow. Lots of small restrooms are better than a few large ones, for instance.

"Travel distance is important," he said. "We want to get as many of the amenities, whether it's for restrooms or concessions, as close to the user as possible, so they're not having to traverse down a long concourse to find the bathroom."

Large restrooms also tend to have other problems. When there are long lines for big restrooms at older venues, it's often the case that many of the stalls are actually empty. "Because people don't have a clear sightline or there isn't a clear circulation path, trying to find an empty stall can be difficult and then you're not getting the efficiency," he said.

The Ladies Rooms

And if there's an influx of female Taylor Swift fans on game night, the stadium should be OK, said Emmett.

Many theaters, airports and public buildings are famous for long lines around women's restrooms but none by the men's. That's started to change in recent years.

Newer arenas are built to host a mix of events that attract different demographics, and their restrooms reflect that. Allegiant could host a sports event with a majority of male attendees but the next week could be a Taylor Swift concert with mostly teenage girls.

Arena management now has to think about the event mix in large, multipurpose buildings and account for the different crowds on different days.Some designers and architects believe that these problems mean that new buildings might trend towards gender neutral restrooms in the coming years.

**Potty parity**

Restrooms are "a public health issue and it's a human rights issue," said Kathryn Anthony, an architecture professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a board member of the American Restroom Association. Her studies have focused on potty parity - the idea that men and women should have equal speed of access to restrooms.

"It shouldn't take (women) longer to access the restroom than it does for a man to access the restroom, that's really the issue," she said.

Studies show that women take about twice as long as men do to use the restroom. For a long time, that went unseen by architects designing public facilities, said Anthony.

"There's been a relative lack of awareness and sensitivity to the needs of women and girls in restrooms," she said. Part of that problem was that until recently, the field of architecture was dominated by men.

Anthony says there needs to be "a reawakening of the American public to just how important restrooms are and the fact that we all need them."

Groups like the World Toilet College, American Restroom Association and the World Toilet Organization say that the right to a clean and readily available restroom is a basic one.

Sports arenas have been particularly lacking. In the 22 years that Cintas has given out the [*America's Best Bathroom Award*](https://www.bestrestroom.com/), it has often gone to a theater, museum and even a supermarket, but a sports stadium has never taken the prize.

This year's winner, the Baltimore/Washington International Airport, has laid the groundwork for the future of restroom design.

**Reimagining the public restroom**

Twenty-four million people pass through the airport annually and internal surveys have consistently shown that restrooms were the number one issue affecting passenger satisfaction at the airport, said Jo Schneider, director of architecture for the airport and the Maryland Aviation Administration.

"It's crazy," said Schneider "It's not the airlines or the waiting area or the concessions that matter. It's the restrooms."

That's why after a lot of feedback from disgruntled customers, the airport decided it was time for a $55 million overhaul of some facilities.

Some of the restrooms at the airport hadn't been updated in a quarter of a century, said Schneider. They weren't built to handle carry-on luggage or to accommodate changing family dynamics.

The redesign is also more conscious of the needs of the disabled. Stalls were made 20% larger and doors open outwards instead of inwards to give users more space. Stall doors also go from the floor to ceiling, ensuring more privacy as travelers use the facilities or change clothing.

Screens alert users to how many free stalls there are and ping custodial staff when soap or paper towels need replacing.

Each set of restrooms now has a men's room, a women's room, a family room, an adult change room and a lactation room.

All of this, said Schneider, has increased the flow through restrooms and limited lines - allowing travelers to get on with their trips or giving them more time to buy a coffee on the way to their gate.

And as for the Allegiant's test "Super Flush" years before the Super Bowl, the goal was to put a huge load on the arena's plumbing system to make sure no problems arise at big events like the upcoming February 11 match-up between the Kansas Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers.

"We don't ever want there to be 60,000 or 70,000 people in the building and have the system fail," said Julie Amacker, director for CAA Icon, which served as a project manager for the stadium's construction, in a video depicting the project. "This is one of the last boxes to check that says we're ready."

By Nicole Goodkind, CNN

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**Load-Date:** February 10, 2024

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