CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS INCORPORATED ®

Home Tips®

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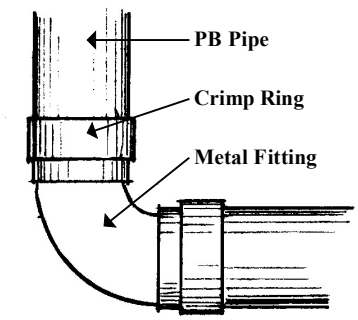
Q & A

Polybutylene Update?

We are looking at a new home and the plumbing is the grey polybutylene piping. We have heard horror stories about the piping. If it is used in new homes, have they worked out all of the problems?

According to Dan Friedman, of American Home Service Company, a residential and commercial property inspection service in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., polybutylene (PB) piping has been used since the mid-1970s for water supply and in house supply piping. Two types of PB piping failures have led to class-action lawsuits against PB plumbing manufacturers: leaks due to improper installation and leaks due to defective materials.

Early failures were found in Celcon acetyl-plastic fittings (tees and elbows) used for connections. A portion of the fitting is inserted into the pipe and then clamped in place using an aluminum or copper crimp ring over the outside of the pipe. Leaks have also occurred with the more recent copper and brass insert fittings shown in the drawing below.



While earlier fitting failures were attributed in part to defective material, the PB industry blames current fitting leaks on improper installation. The industry has taken a number of steps to reduce failures, which include detailed installation instructions, a redesigned crimping tool, a "go/no go" gauge and a suggestion to use metal insert fittings and annealed-copper crimp rings.

These recommended methods and materials have significantly reduced problems, and some builders are still installing PB piping in new construction due to lower installation cost.

But a second problem may be looming. Testimony from a class-action lawsuit, a 1991 *60 Minutes* program and an installation instruction booklet all indicate that the piping itself may crack and leak in some conditions. PB piping may be particularly vulnerable where higher levels of chlorine are present in the water supply. If the material is installed in environments where there are elevated levels of chlorine, the risk of future leaks is greater.

A PB-related class-action lawsuit has been filed and preliminary approval of the settlement has been granted. If a qualifying leak has already occurred, deadlines for submitting claims are as early as last August 21, 1996.

For more information, contact the Industry-PB Technology Center at (800) 338-7732 or for information about the class-action settlement agreement, contact the Consumer Plumbing Recovery Center at (800) 876-4698.

Those with World Wide Web access can view the class-action notice at ***http://www.hunt.com/polybutylene/pipe/notice.htm*** and the class action proposed settlement at ***http://www.hunt.com/polybutylene/pipe/propset.htm.*** To see photos that will help you identify the materials involved, see ***http:/www.hunt.com/polybutylene/pipe/pipe.htm.***

Builder Complaint?

We are having a very hard time getting our builder to come back and take care of punch list items that he promised to do before closing. Do you have any suggestions or is there any way to make him do what he is supposed to do?

Unfortunately, this is a common problem. Since builders are not required to be licensed (other than a business license) or certified in the state of Georgia, there is little you can do if you have a complaint.

Cobb County is the only metro area that requires a builder to submit a performance bond when applying for a building permit. This assures the builder will comply with all code related items. If the builder refuses to correct a code discrepancy, then the county can use the bond to have the problem corrected. Again, this only applies to code problems in Cobb County.

Send the builder a certified letter stating what was agreed on before closing including a list of the items in question. Give the builder a reasonable amount of time in which to complete the items. If you do not hear back in a week or two, send another follow-up letter. If he still does not respond, call the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Atlanta at 404-688-4910. They will help you with your problem since most businesses do not want to be listed with outstanding complaints that could jeopardize future business. If the problem still goes unresolved, file a complaint with the Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 356, East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334 or call them at 404-656-3790.

Radon Update?

Is there a health risk with radon gas? We hear conflicting stories and cannot make up our minds whether to have our home tested.

There was an article by Bill Hendrick and Amanda Husted printed in the July 17, 1996 edition of the Atlanta Journal Constitution that stated the following:

Study: RADON DOESN'T INCREASE CANCER RISK.

"Exposure to radon gas in the home doesn't increase risks of lung cancer, a study in today's issue of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute says.

Long-term exposure to radon, a naturally occurring gas in the soil from uranium, has concerned consumers and scientists since studies of underground miners confirmed a link between radon and lung cancer. But the miners inhaled radon, a tasteless and odorless gas, in heavy concentrations in poorly ventilated shafts.

The latest study compared 1,973 lung cancer patients with a group of 2,885 healthy people matched for age, sex and other characteristics. Both patients and healthy people had lived in their single-family homes for at least 19 years.

Researchers measured concentrations of radon gas in homes for a year. The Concentration is influenced by the amount of uranium in the ground and the ground's permeability, by climate, and by the construction and ventilation of the home. Researchers found no evidence that higher concentrations of the gas in homes had any statistical link to developing lung cancer."

Since there is conflicting reports, don't take a chance and go ahead and have your home tested. The cost is marginal and the peace of mind is well worth the expense.

ASHI Web Site

The American Society of Home Inspectors has a web site that can help consumers with some home inspection questions and how to find a qualified home inspector. Contact them at http://www.mhv.net/~dfriedman/ashihome.html.

If you have a question, change of address, comment, home tip or would like to send *Home Tips* to your clients, send your letter to *Home Tips*, Christian Building Inspectors, Inc., 1003 Star Court, Norcross, Georgia 30093. Or you can E-Mail your questions to us at rod.harrison@worldnet.att.net. We reserve the right to edit questions for length.

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Quote Of The Month

"THE QUALITY OF A PERSON'S LIFE IS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THEIR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR CHOSEN FIELD OF ENDEAVOR."

- VINCENT T. LOMBARDI

A Tip Of The Hat To:

Tammy Park
Re/Max North Atlanta
International Realty
Doraville, Georgia

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• For Additional Information, Contact Rod Harrison or Leslie Noah-Smith 770-925-8518 •

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