

Polybutylene (Poly-B) Pressure Water Piping

Failures of polybutylene (Poly-B) piping used in some homes in British Columbia and the United States have resulted in leaking pipes, possibly causing water damage.

These failures have raised some concern among Alberta homeowners. This fact sheet provides information about Poly-B piping in Alberta.

Poly-B in Alberta

- The Poly-B installed in Alberta primarily used copper or brass metal insert fittings and soft copper crimping rings, **not the plastic insert fittings with either aluminum or copper bands which are failing in some other jurisdictions.**
- Alberta Municipal Affairs is aware of approximately four Poly-B failures in Alberta over the last 20 years. All were related to improper installation procedures rather than the materials.
- Poly-B water piping was introduced to the Alberta construction industry in the mid-1970s. Unconfirmed estimates are that about 148,000 homes in Alberta have Poly-B water systems.
- Poly-B will not be in your home if it was built before 1975 and no plumbing renovations have since been carried out.
- Homeowners can determine whether their homes have Poly-B by looking for grey-coloured flexible plastic pipe or tubing. The plastic insert fittings can be identified by the same grey-colour as Poly-B pipe, while copper or brass insert fittings and copper bands will have the same appearance as a penny.

Product Information

- Poly-B piping for drinking water distribution systems has been used in residential dwellings and commercial structures throughout Canada for more than 20 years.

- Poly-B piping and fittings are intended for use in both hot and cold water distribution systems for pressures up to 100 psi (690 kPa) and operating at temperatures up to and including 180°F (82°C).

- Poly-B piping can be identified by its light grey colour and by the continuous permanent markings on the tubing. The markings indicate: pipe size, manufacturer's name or trademark, date code, material designation, pressure rating, certification agency and construction standard (e.g., CSA-B137.8).

- Poly-B piping is produced from polybutylene resin, a high molecular-weight polymer. In the spring of 1998, manufacturers stopped producing Poly-B piping because suppliers suspended production of this resin.

- Poly-B piping is tested and certified by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and remains acceptable for installation under the National Plumbing Code of Canada 1995.

- Installers and consumers are encouraged to report product failures by contacting Alberta Municipal Affairs, Safety Services Branch, Plumbing and Gas at (780) 427-8256.

- Product information is also available from CSA International. Copies of their Fact Sheet and a pipe check-list on Poly-B can be obtained from their web site at:
www.csa.ca/consumers/consumer_tips
E-mail info@csa.ca
Phone: (416) 747-4000 or 1-800-463-6727.

Additional copies of this fact sheet can be obtained from Alberta Municipal Affairs. Phone 427-8256 or call toll-free outside of Edmonton by dialing 310-0000 then the number.