

URBAN PIPING^{LTD.}
POLY B REPLACEMENT SERVICES

*Everything You Need to
Know About Poly B™ Piping
and How to Hire a Qualified Contractor*



CALGARY SUN
FINANCIAL POST

NATIONAL*POST
CALGARY HERALD

EDMONTON JOURNAL
THE VANCOUVER SUN



Dear Homeowners,

We understand the frustrations that come with receiving the news that your home contains Poly B™ piping can come as quite a shock. You may be currently dealing with steady leaks in your home, and you're concerned about further damages. Or, perhaps you haven't experienced a leak in your home, but are aware a home contains Poly B™ piping and are trying to determine if a replacement is necessary.

If any of these sound familiar, you are in the right place and this document will be essential in helping you through this process.

We can tell you from over 15 years of experience dealing with Poly B™ piping. We have seen every possible outcome and scenario. We have seen homes completely flooded due to pipe bursts, and homeowners spending thousands of dollars on fixing leaking pipes only to have another leak happen in a matter of weeks. These are all genuine scenarios when dealing with Poly B™.

The situation is unfortunate, frustrating, and costly, and we completely understand that. However, a 100% remediation of active Poly B™ piping from a property is the only solution to ensure complete peace of mind and prevent any Poly B™ nightmare from happening in the future.

Who is Urban Piping?

Urban Piping Ltd. is the leader in Poly B™ Replacement in Canada. With multiple Canadian offices, we service nearly every part of western Canada. Our Polybutylene pipe replacement service offers a complete re-piping, drywall, and paint repair service for any commercial or residential building. All Poly B™ replacement work is done in-house by Urban Piping, and we do not hire any outside contractors.

We are licensed, bonded, and insured plumbers with decades of experience. We have completed more Poly B™ remediations than any other company in Canada. Our business holds an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau, and hundreds of 5-star reviews online for strictly the replacement of Poly B™ piping.



What is Poly B™ piping?

Poly B™ piping, known as polybutylene, is a type of grey plastic plumbing pipe most commonly used for residential plumbing works between 1985 and 1997. Poly B™ was common in North America, almost all new builds and renovations that took place during these years used this type of pipe. Poly B™ has been banned due to extensive water and property damage caused by its high failure rates.

What does Poly B™ Piping look like?

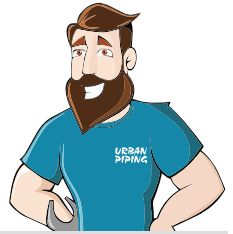
If your home was built or renovated between 1985 and 1997, it is crucial to have your home inspected for possible Poly B™ pipes. The first way to identify Poly B™ piping is by its colours. Polybutylene piping is made in blue, silvery gray, and black colours. Blue pipes were used mainly for cold water, while black and silvery gray were used interchangeably for indoor and outdoor purposes.



Why does Poly B™ Piping fail?

When it was first introduced to the plumbing industry, Poly B™ was widely accepted due to its affordability and flexibility. However, it was not long when its molecular flaws came to light and the pipe started to rupture and fail woefully. This caused water leakage and property damage worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. The molecular bonds inside Poly B™ Piping are unstable causing the pipe to crack under certain environmental strains. The following scenarios speed up the deterioration process of the piping.

- High chlorine content in the municipal water supply.
- Prolonged exposure to UV light.
- Exposure to high heat areas or high temperatures.



What is the Failure Rate?

If you are looking for a short answer, it is 100%. It is not a question about if it will fail; but **when** it will fail. The different factors involved with the deterioration of the piping make the exact time frames impossible to determine. Here are some notable factors in determining the failure rate of Poly B™ piping:

- **Where was the pipe manufactured?**

If the piping was manufactured in a hotter climate, the rate of failure increases instead of a colder setting. We know that high heat is a critical factor in the deterioration of the piping.

- **How was the piping transported?**

Was the piping transported in a closed semi-trailer or an open flatbed? UV light during the transportation increases the failure rate of the piping.

- **How was the piping stored?**

Often, the piping was stored outside in the sun until the tradesmen were ready to install it into a home. Exposure to weather elements and UV light would cause quick deterioration of the piping.

- **What was the original installation process?**

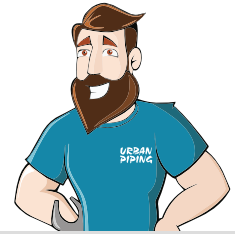
New home building companies working with large contractors typically deliver all of the materials for an entire block of houses at one time. These materials are placed either on the driveway or inside the garage while the teams work through home by home. Poly B Piping may have been exposed to UV light and temperature changes for months before even being installed in the home, causing a higher failure rate.

- **Is it used in a well water supply system or a high chlorine municipal setting?**

The higher the potency of chlorine in a water system, the faster the pipe will deteriorate.

With all of these factors considered, there is no way to determine exactly when a polybutylene piping system will fail. We know that the event of the first leak is a tell-tale sign that the entire home's piping system is on its way to failure. The longest we have seen the piping last for is 34 years, and the fastest we have seen it fail is within the first 12 months. This is the reality of what we're dealing with when it comes to Poly B™ piping.

Lawsuits, Litigation, and Insurance



When was Poly B™ Banned?

There are 2 different dates on which polybutylene piping was banned.

The use of Poly B™ was banned by the National Plumbing Code, which oversaw all plumbing trades in Canada and refused to recognize Poly B™ after 1997. The pipe was disallowed to be used to construct any building requiring piping systems.

The government of Canada officially banned Poly B™ in 2005. The ban's reasoning was that a substantial volume of lawsuits were filed against Shell and Dupont over structural damage and property damage caused by ruptured Poly B™ piping throughout hundreds of homes. Poly B™ was reported to be failing after a few years of installation. This resulted in structural damage to drywalls, water damage, and costly restoration. Shell and Dupont lost the lawsuit.

Poly B™ Lawsuits and Litigation History

Combined class-action lawsuits made Poly B™ one of the highest pre-settlement lawsuits in North American history. The total combined lawsuits amount to multiple billions of dollars.

Poly B™ Insurance Coverage

Poly B™ piping has proven to be a huge liability for both homeowners and insurance companies. In 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada deemed Poly B™ inadmissible to indemnity clauses. This means that no insurance company is required to ensure a home with Poly B™ piping under law.

Until recently, most insurance companies have offered grandfather clauses to current customers with Poly B™ piping and leniency to new clients. However, because of the losses incurred by insurance companies, most of them are no longer willing to renew policies or insure new clients that come to them with Poly B™ in the home. Legally, they do not have to because of the Supreme Court's ruling in 2005.

Buyer beware, if an insurance company does offer to insure the home, there are typically massive premiums and costly deductibles following a first leak.



Real Estate and Poly B™ Piping

There is a boom in Alberta's real estate market with decade-low housing prices and historically low-interest rates. This means that houses are moving regardless of Poly B™ piping, and many buyers and sellers may be caught off guard if they are unaware of the Poly B™ piping in the home and the risks involved.

Buying a Home with Poly B™

As a buyer, if you have found a home, but it has Polybutylene installed, you may feel discouraged about buying the house. Most houses built in the 80s and 90s are top-quality builds and are often located in highly desirable neighborhoods with great amenities. A quick remediation will have your new home in tip-top shape and give you peace of mind that your domestic water plumbing system is worry-free for years to come.

However, it is important to mention that sellers do not repipe homes before putting up their properties for sale. Before you complete the purchasing contract with the seller of the home with Polybutylene piping, inform your real estate agent to tell the seller to either:

- Replace the Poly B™ piping in the home OR
- Reduce the selling price of the home to allow you to replace the Poly B™ pipes before you move in.
- Oftentimes, a seller will meet you halfway on the remediation of Poly B™ piping.

Selling a Home with Poly B™

If you are selling a home with Poly B™ piping, you may be faced with an educated buyer who is aware of these Poly B™ issues, and this person may be unable to get home insurance upon purchasing the home.

There are typically three options...

1. Replace the Poly B™ piping before selling the home.
2. Face a buyer asking for unrealistic discounts to cover the remediation costs.
3. Deal with potential buyers walking away from a home because they simply do not want to deal with the hassle of replacing the piping in the home upon purchasing or be unable to accommodate the remediation itself.

Poly B™ and Home inspectors

A qualified home inspector should be familiar with Poly B™ and the piping risks in a home. They should not implement scare tactics but educate the homeowner on the risks and educate them on their options in dealing with it.



The Poly B™ Replacement Process

This is how we at Urban Piping approach a Poly B™ remediation project.



1. Protecting the home

It is important to protect your property against dust and debris that will be generated when tearing your walls, your flooring, carpets, furniture, and other belongings should be covered with plastic wrap before commencing Poly B remediation.



2. Begin Replacement

The remediation process will start by checking the pipes buried in the drywalls, following these steps:

1. Cut holes in drywall and ceiling.
2. Remove 100% of the active Poly B™ piping.
3. Replace with new piping.



3. Restoring the home

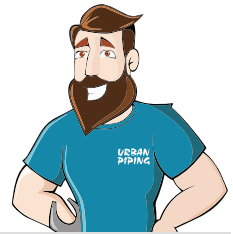
After completing the removal and installation of new piping, we proceed to restore the home to the state before commencing the project. We undertake the following tasks:

- Taping – seals joints between wallboard and plasterboard to prepare wall surface for painting.
- Painting – to match the home's existing colour and tone without any differences.
- Texturing – conditioning the entire work area to be uniform with other parts of the home.



4. Cleaning the home

We clean the home, ensuring that it is in the same condition it was before we began the project. Our goal is to make it look as if we had never even been there.



The Poly B™ Replacement Options

Installing a new plumbing system into a building requires adequate knowledge about the right material for performance, efficiency, safety, and durability. Different types of pipes are available for piping purposes, and they each come with a different estimated life expectancy. Here is a list of available home piping options.

Class C PEX Piping (Low-Grade)

- This type of pipe is commonly found in big box home improvement stores and was the first type of PEX piping released on the market.
- This PEX is only rated for 80-100psi.
- Can come color-coded.
- Class C PEX has low resistance to high heat and will commonly burst if frozen.
- Estimated life expectancy is 50 years.

Class B PEX Piping (Mid-Grade)

- Class B PEX is the pipe most plumbers refer to as “PEX” likely because of lack of training and because it is regularly accessible through typical plumbing suppliers.
- Ratings for Class B PEX range from 100 - 110 psi.
- The pipe is cross-linked and has adequate freezing and heat-resistant prevention qualities.
- Class B PEX can be ordered in an O2 Barrier tubing for in-floor heat applications.
- Estimated life expectancy is 50 years.

Class A PEX Piping (High-Grade)

- Class A PEX is the highest-rated PEX piping available on the market.
- In its most advanced grade, this pipe can handle up to 497 psi.
- Top manufacturers warranty piping for up to 25 years.
- With a cross-linked development process, this PEX piping can withstand multiple occasions of freezing and extreme heat applications.
- Class A PEX can be ordered in O2 (oxygen barrier), making it the perfect PEX for in-floor heating applications and domestic water lines.
- Estimated life expectancy is 100+ years.



Poly B™ Contractors



Poly B™ remediation or replacement requires the services of expert craftsman in four professional trades:

Plumbers, Tapers, Painters, and Texturers

Responsibilities of Poly B™ Contractors

- Plumber – removes and installs new water lines during the Poly B™ replacement process.
- Taper – seals joints between wallboard and plasterboard and repairs holes cut in drywall and ceiling to prepare the wall surface for painting.
- Painter – paints the work area to become similar to the other parts of the house.
- Texturer – textures the ceilings to match the home.

However, with all of these trades involved, it opens up the door for problems, such as:

- Poor communication
- Delays in service
- Inaccurate quotes
- Unfinished work
- Missed deadlines
- Poor craftsmanship
- Insurance issues

Why is the Experience so Important?

Hiring an experienced contractor is invaluable especially when replacing Poly B™ piping because:

- The right contractor should know your home without visiting, have access to blueprints, and be able to give you an estimate over the phone in 5 minutes in most cases.
- The contractor should complete the Poly B™ remediation project as scheduled by meeting pre-scheduled deadlines.
- Quality craftsmanship that guarantees 100% replacement of all active Poly B™ inside of the home.
- Proper team qualifications, critical thinking, and communication.

Insurance and Poly B™ Contractors

It is essential to hire a licensed and insured Poly B™ contractor to replace Poly B™ piping in your home. When hiring a contractor, ensure that the following conditions are met:

- Contractors should have a minimum of 5 million dollars of insurance per home they are working on.
- When using a company that uses sub-contracts, figure out who would be held responsible for covering the insurance in the event of an issue. This can lead to prolonged legal disputes causing significant stress on a homeowner.

Warranty and Poly B™ Contractors

When hiring a Poly B™ contractor, ask for a warranty, the assurance that the project will be completed satisfactorily. Piping should be replaced with a minimum of class A PEX piping, which comes with a 25 years warranty on the piping from the manufacturer.

Contractors should have a 2-year minimum warranty on all other materials and labour.

Ask yourself: "Can the contractor afford to cover the warranty work?" Smaller companies tend not to have the financial backing to cover these problems, resulting in huge problems for the homeowner. Insurance companies typically do not cover warranty work, and contractors need to be secure enough to cover the costs.

Referrals and Reviews with Poly B™ Contractors

Ask for referrals and read past customers' reviews when hiring a Poly B™ contractor. Do your homework, make sure you are convinced about the referrals provided to you as many companies today stage fake reviews and phone references.

Contractors should have picture proof of the work they have completed before, case studies on their website, and Poly B™ replacement reviews online. Many phone call referrals have been known to be staged in the industry. Do not rely on phone call referrals 100 percent of the time. Rely on HomeStars, Google, and the BBB for accredited reviews by certified buyers talking about Poly B™ replacement.

Poly B™ Pipe Replacement Guarantees

The contractor should provide a guarantee that all the Poly B™ pipes will be removed from the home. Some contractors have been known to leave sections of pipe in difficult to reach areas.

Poly B™ Pipe Replacement Time Frames

The actual repiping of the standard homes can be accomplished in 72 hours. An entire Poly B™ remediation service in most standard homes can be completed in 10 days with experienced contractors.

Prepping a Home for Poly B™ Replacement

The home should be properly prepped, following the steps below:

- a. All flooring of the home should be covered. Dent proof ram boards should be used to cover any hardwood flooring.
- b. All furniture should be removed or covered with plastic.
- c. Rooms that do not require work in a home should be taped off to prevent dust from entering.
- d. A 4 stage hepa filter should always be set up and used to mitigate drywall dust throughout the remediation process.

Cleaning a Home After a Poly B™ Replacement

The contractor should clean the home properly and restore it to the condition before the remediation project begins. When replacing the entire piping system of a home, a lot of dust and residue is created, resulting in a massive mess. Contractors should use a minimum of 4 stage HEPA filter systems for dust mitigation. Upon completing the work, additional cleaning may be required as often dust will settle over time. Properly preparing a home minimizes this and, most times, prevents the need for excessive further cleaning.

Project Management Software & Documented Process

The contractor should have project management software in place to document the process of the remediation with pictures of the work as it is being completed.

Have Questions About Poly B™ Piping?

Feel free to contact Urban Piping with any questions that you may have regarding Poly B™ Piping.

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