

Fulbright Home
Inspections
Lic.# 70001143
(918) 707-0689

POLYBUTYLENE PLUMBING

Polybutylene pipe (PB) is an easy to cut gray plastic that is put together with crimp connections. It was introduced in the late 1970's and it is still manufactured and used.

Different views: There is at least one inspection company in Eastern Oklahoma that will always take the position that all PB plumbing must be replaced as soon as they identify the presence of PB, even though no current leakage exists. That is their prerogative.

Fulbright Home Inspections does not agree that polybutylene pipe must be replaced, unless there is an existing identifiable problem/failure. Here are our reasons:

Home inspectors cannot require that anything be done to a property. The inspector can only identify a defect (Polybutylene is not in itself a defect unless it leaks) and recommend actions in accordance with his findings.

Although much has been said about susceptibility to deterioration in the presence of chlorine, the only studies that we are aware of showed a deterioration of the joints in earlier installations. The joints were made from different plastics than the pipe itself. (Per H.D.R. Engineering of Bellevue, Washington).

PB manufacturers have addressed joint problems with the "manablock" system and by joining pipes with a copper tube secured by two crimped copper bands.

Bill Jackson, one of only a handful of Master Code Inspectors in the state of Oklahoma, inspects plumbing for Oklahoma City. There is no problem with properly functioning polybutylene plumbing from his perspective.

Harold Schuler, owner of Schuler Enterprises and a licensed plumber has the same view.

Fred Ayers, State President of the Oklahoma Residential & Commercial Inspection Association holds the same view.

Ed Scribner, a long time builder in Nichols Hills uses polybutylene today.

The only valid study or reports that we have seen clearly identify a past problem with the joints, either incorrectly installed or the pre-manifold period when acetal polymers were used at the

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joints. It is our opinion that unless there is a visible failure, polybutylene pipe is fine. What I am really saying is that it was older pipe/joints that had the problem and if it was going to fail, it probably has failed. Galvanized, PVC, copper etc, will all fail at some point, but we do not believe that polybutylene pipe is any better or worse than other systems when properly installed. I would be glad to have a polybutylene system installed in my house.

Others disagree. You may obtain additional information about the class action lawsuit and/or compensation/replacement of a failed system from the Plumbing Claims Group at 1-800-356-3496 or on the WEB.

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