

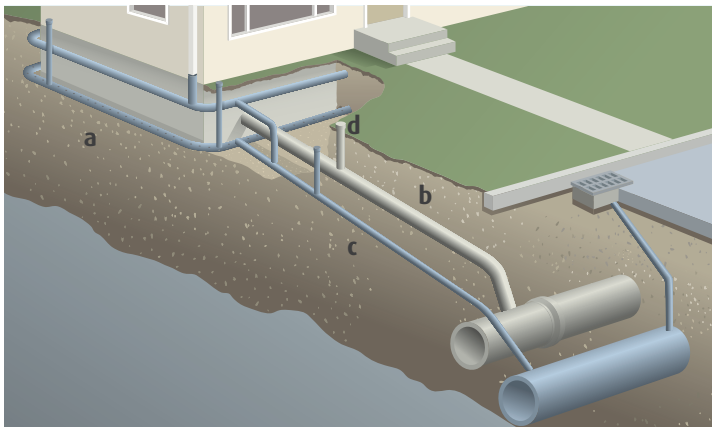
# Maintaining Underground Pipes

## Information Sheet

### Prevent Basement Flooding

#### Pipes Need Maintenance

Underground pipes deteriorate over time. They require periodic maintenance and eventually need to be replaced. In general, homeowners own and are responsible for maintaining the pipes between the house and the property line. In Oak Bay, however, this responsibility extends all the way to the municipal sewer main and stormwater drainage system.



Modern building code

#### Underground Pipes

- a. Foundation drain:** drains water away from the house's foundation and prevents wet basements and flooding
- b. Sewer lateral:** carries water from sinks, showers, toilets and laundry to the municipal sewer system or a septic system
- c. Stormwater lateral:** carries rainwater and groundwater from foundation drains and the roof (through gutters and downspouts) to the municipal stormwater system
- d. Inspection Chamber:** used for inspections and maintenance (required by code since the 1990s)

#### Signs of Possible Pipe Failure

Here are signs to watch for that could indicate a problem with your pipes:

- Wet, warped or stained walls and floors
- Musty odours, sewer odours or slow drains
- Ground above pipes is very lush or sunken

#### Risk of Pipe Failure & Basement Flooding

Age is the key risk factor for pipe failure. Generally, pipes are the same age as the house, unless they have already been replaced. Most pipes installed before the 1980s have already exceeded their expected lifespan.

#### Pipe Material and Risk Level

ERA OF HOME	PIPE MATERIALS	PIPE LIFESPAN	RISK LEVEL
Pre-1930s	Wood Stave (laterals)	75	High
Pre-1940s	Asbestos Cement	75	Elevated
Pre-1960s	Clay	75	Elevated
1950–1980	Concrete	50	Moderate
1960–1980	Tarpaper (laterals)	50	High
Pre-1990s	Big "O" Corrugated (foundation drains)	75	Moderate
1980s & newer	Plastic Pipes (PVC/ABS)	75	Low

RISK LEVEL			
High	Elevated	Moderate	Low

Do you know how old your pipes are? Age is the key risk factor for pipe failure and basement flooding.

If you experience a sewer backup, only notify your municipality if a plumber confirms that the source of the issue comes from municipally-owned pipes.

## If your Basement Floods

- Stop all water use and toilet flushing
- Call a licensed plumber
- Call your insurance broker if you need to make a claim
- Protect yourself with gloves and boots
- Take photos before starting clean up

## Camera Inspections

- Have your pipes camera inspected by a plumber or drainage specialist; ideally someone who can also auger or flush your pipes if the camera is impeded by a blockage
- Request a copy of the video, inspection notes and/or site sketch for your records
- Get more than one quote if significant repairs are needed

## Know What Your Insurance Covers

Many basic insurance policies provide little to no coverage for basement flooding so read your policy carefully:

- Is damage from sewer and/or stormwater backups or overland flooding covered?
- What is the deductible?
- What is the maximum dollar value of the coverage?
- Are costs for accessing/repairing the pipe included (digging up the yard, landscaping, etc.)?

## Protect the Environment

Leaky or broken underground pipes can contaminate soil, groundwater and waterways, and cause sewer overflows during heavy rainfall. We all need to do our part to prevent overflows:

- Municipalities routinely inspect and maintain their sewers
- Homeowners can do their part by inspecting and maintaining pipes, to ensure they are properly working



## Tips to Prevent Flooding

- Have your pipes camera inspected by a plumber or drainage specialist at least every 10 years
- Fix issues identified by a camera inspection (roots in pipes from nearby trees, cracked pipes, misaligned pipe joints, grease buildup, etc.)
- Keep your inspection chambers accessible so they can be easily used for maintenance or emergency work; don't hide or bury them
- Avoid planting water-loving trees over your pipes (e.x., willows, maples, figs)
- Avoid putting fats, oils and grease down drains
- Avoid flushing wipes, napkins or paper towels down toilets or drains
- Ask your plumber if your home would benefit from a backwater valve (if you already have one, ensure it still seals properly and is free of obstructions)



Making a difference...together

Capital Regional District

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[www.crd.bc.ca/pipes](http://www.crd.bc.ca/pipes)