

Piping problems

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Leapfrog Plumbing technician Austin Barber inspects the newly installed copper pipes under a house.

Photos Andy Scheck

All of these materials have different lifespans, different strengths and weaknesses, different handling rules, different health questions, different uses, and different costs.

Knowing whether or not a pipe repair or replacement is needed, and how much is a reasonable cost, is not always easy, especially for a young family with the stresses of a house purchase and a new baby all at the same time.

Lafayette residents Steven and Becky Barnstetter had to replace their home's sewer line four years ago. As with many loans, the bank required repairs to protect their investment, but there was an unpleasant surprise on top of that expectation: "In order to get the loan we had to spend about \$56,000 to lift the house, but a city

inspector said the sewer also needed to be replaced," Steven Barnstetter said. "We had it inspected, but it didn't have separations or holes." The pipe had been checked with a borescope (a camera that is sent through the interior of a pipe).

The inspector had come to check on legitimate repairs that the Barnstetters had permits for, and that's when he spotted a waste pipe extension that the original homeowner had jerry-rigged for an additional bathroom without permits. Both Barnstetters recall the man saying he was a city of Lafayette inspector. "He told us that the city of Lafayette would come and pour concrete down it if we didn't get it fixed, so we'd never be able to use it!" said Becky. Alarmed, she ran to apply for permits.

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