

Copper-pipe corrosion worrisome

Hundreds of homeowners in Sarasota County have had to have all their water lines replaced in their homes due to copper pipe corrosion from the inside out. Many more are on contractor lists waiting to have their plumbing replaced.

I was informed by the Sarasota County water department that chemicals -- orthophosphates -- are being added to the water to coat the copper pipes, helpfully reducing the likelihood of corrosion.

I am concerned with the facts that the water we drink may be corroding copper pipes and that chemicals are being added to our water supply. How can we be sure of our water quality and safety?

The county is studying the problem but to date does not know the cause of these pinhole leaks, which are occurring elsewhere in the United States. Jacksonville no longer permits the use of copper plumbing in new- home construction. The San Diego building code requires pressure testing and steam flushing of all water lines in new homes prior to occupancy.

Most homes in Sarasota County have copper plumbing that is under a concrete slab foundation, making it very difficult to repair or replace defective plumbing.

In view of the preceding, would it not be advisable for the county to modify its building code to at least alleviate the problem of access to the water lines in a home? In addition, homeowners who plan to build should consider the use of other materials for the water system and consider plumbing accessibility in the construction phase.

William Murray

Nokomis

Editor's note: In an October 2004 letter to the editor responding to an earlier letter on pinhole leaks, Sarasota County Utilities said the water it supplies meets or exceeds all state and federal guidelines for safe drinking water.