

Know

You Should



A Message from the American Concrete Pipe Association

Bulletin No. 114

County Counts on Concrete When Metal Pipes Fail

Revised November 24, 1997 – 2 pages

DeKalb County - Thirty years ago, when DeKalb County, Georgia engineers included metal pipe in their stormwater sewer designs, they probably thought the system would last indefinitely.

Unfortunately, the lines running throughout the county have begun to reach the end of their 30-year service lives, causing the current engineers to scramble to repair the crumbling piping. The corrugated metal pipes were used extensively during the region's building boom of the 1960s but now are rusted and collapsing, according to a story published in the *Decatur-DeKalb News Era*. (See copy attached.)

Since 1995, when more than 20 incidents of collapsed pipes were reported, the county's Roads and Drainage Division has worked on an as-needed basis to repair sections of the network as it fails, said Nancy Smith, a senior civil engineer for the county.

While alternative materials are being used in some of the applications, virtually all cross drains under highways are concrete pipe in sizes ranging from 18- to 48-inches, Smith said.

Although it was permissible to use metal pipe across roads in the 1960s, today's regulations prohibit that practice, she said. Now, the county is installing concrete pipe under its roads because of concrete's strength and durability, she said.

The *News Era* quoted Tom Black, director of DeKalb County Public Works, as saying the county is attempting to deal with the problem in some areas by sleeving coated pipes into existing pipes. However, in

some cases the roads must be dug up to replace the old pipes. The problem is serious enough, Black said, that if a pipe collapses, the road will be unsafe.

It could cost the county roughly \$25 million over the next five to seven years to do a complete study of the drainage system's condition and to repair it, Black told the *News Era*. The county's choices are to raise repair funds through a sales tax or to close some of the county roads, he said.