

86,400-Gallon Leaks: Aging Underground Plumbing and Ground Movement Create Emerging Property Risks Across Kern County

Kern County property owners face aging infrastructure and land subsidence, making professional evaluation of buried plumbing lines essential.

BAKERSFIELD, CA, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Kern County property owners face a combination of aging housing infrastructure, water-conservation pressures and documented ground-movement conditions that make the condition of buried plumbing an increasingly important consideration for homeowners, buyers and property managers.

The issue does not affect every property equally, and there is no reliable regional dataset establishing that a specific percentage of Bakersfield's private plumbing lines have exceeded their service life. However, Bakersfield has a substantial inventory of older homes, with more than half of the city's housing stock more than 30 years old. City housing data also show significant numbers of homes constructed during the 1970s and earlier. Housing age alone does not establish the age or condition of a property's plumbing, but older properties may warrant closer inspection of water and sewer infrastructure.

At the same time, the broader San Joaquin Valley has a well-documented history of land subsidence associated primarily with groundwater-level declines and compaction of subsurface materials. California's Department of Water Resources has documented site-specific subsidence of up to approximately 5 feet in certain targeted monitoring areas along the California Aqueduct in Kern County post-construction, while historical San Joaquin Valley land subsidence across broader affected regions exceeds 28 feet.



The official brand logo for J&J Plumbing Services in Bakersfield, California, highlighting professional residential plumbing solutions.

Ground Movement and Buried Infrastructure

Ground movement can place stress on buried utility infrastructure, although the extent and consequences vary according to local geology, pipe material, installation conditions, groundwater conditions and the nature of the movement.

California DWR identifies several forms of subsidence in the San Joaquin Valley, including aquifer-system compaction associated with groundwater-level declines, hydrocompaction of moisture-deficient deposits, subsidence related to oil and gas production, and other geological processes. In portions of the Kern subsidence area, DWR has documented measurable ongoing rates of land-surface change.

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Replace assumptions with information; age doesn't reflect your plumbing's true condition”

Natalio Pergis

These regional conditions do not mean that every residential plumbing failure is caused by subsidence or drought. Pipe deterioration can result from numerous factors, including corrosion, age, defective joints, root intrusion, improper installation, ground movement and ordinary wear.



Natalio Pergis, owner of J&J Plumbing Services, with the company service vehicle in Bakersfield, providing professional plumbing and drain solutions throughout Kern County.

Older Plumbing Materials Can Require Evaluation

Properties constructed decades ago may contain plumbing materials that have different failure characteristics from modern systems.

Galvanized steel water piping, for example, can experience internal corrosion and mineral buildup that restricts water flow and eventually contributes to leakage. Older cast-iron and clay sewer systems can experience corrosion, cracking, joint deterioration, root intrusion and other defects.

The condition of an individual system, rather than the home's construction date alone, is therefore the most useful indicator of whether replacement or rehabilitation may be appropriate.

A professional inspection can help identify conditions that are not apparent during normal household use. Depending on the property, diagnostic options may include sewer-camera inspection, pressure testing, leak detection and visual inspection of accessible plumbing components.

Underground Water Loss Can Be Significant

Even a relatively small continuous leak can result in substantial water consumption.

For example, a leak flowing at 2 gallons per minute would discharge approximately 86,400 gallons in a 30-day month if it continued uninterrupted.

The actual consequences of an underground leak depend on its location, duration, pressure, soil conditions and surrounding construction. In some circumstances, persistent leakage can saturate or erode surrounding soils and contribute to localized settlement or other property damage.

For homeowners concerned about unexplained water consumption, comparing water usage over time and investigating unexplained increases can provide an early indication that further inspection may be warranted.

Real Estate and Property Disclosures

Plumbing defects can also become relevant during residential real-estate transactions.

California sellers have disclosure obligations concerning known material facts affecting residential property. Consequently, a known sewer-line defect, significant plumbing leak or other material condition may need to be disclosed to prospective buyers.

A plumbing inspection can also identify issues that may become part of negotiations between buyers and sellers. Depending on the circumstances, the parties may negotiate repairs, credits, price adjustments or other terms.

However, there is currently no reliable public dataset demonstrating that sewer-line inspection failures are causing a measurable increase in delayed or canceled Kern County real-estate transactions. Individual transactions should therefore be evaluated on their specific facts.



Natalio Pergis, owner and operator of J&J Plumbing Services, standing outdoors in Bakersfield wearing a company t-shirt.

Insurance Coverage May Be Limited

Property owners should also understand the distinction between sudden accidental damage and deterioration or maintenance-related problems.

The California Department of Insurance states that homeowners policies generally cover certain sudden and accidental water damage but commonly exclude damage associated with seepage or leaks, wear and tear, maintenance and earth movement. Individual policies and endorsements differ, so homeowners should review their policy and consult their insurance professional regarding specific coverage.

This means that the cost of replacing an aging or deteriorated water or [sewer line](#) may not necessarily be covered simply because the failure causes property damage.

Preventive Inspection Can Reduce Uncertainty

For owners of older properties, a preventive plumbing evaluation can provide useful information before a leak or sewer blockage becomes an emergency.

Depending on the property and suspected problem, inspection methods may include:

- Sewer-camera inspections to evaluate sewer laterals and identify cracks, offsets, root intrusion or blockages.
- Pressure testing to evaluate certain water-supply systems.
- Electronic or acoustic leak detection where appropriate.
- Inspection of accessible plumbing connections and service lines.
- Evaluation of water-consumption patterns to identify unexplained increases.

Repair and replacement options vary substantially by property. Conventional excavation may be appropriate in some situations, while trenchless rehabilitation or replacement may be suitable for certain pipe configurations and site conditions.

A qualified [plumbing professional](#) should determine whether a particular trenchless or conventional repair method is appropriate after evaluating the pipe and surrounding site.



Natalio Pergis performing professional pipe repair and evaluation on an exterior water service line, helping homeowners address aging infrastructure in Kern County.

A Practical Approach for Older Properties

The goal is not to suggest that every pre-1980 home requires immediate plumbing replacement. Rather, property owners should understand that housing age, plumbing age and plumbing condition are three different things.

A home built in the 1960s may have completely modernized plumbing. Conversely, a relatively well-maintained older property may still contain original buried infrastructure that has never been professionally evaluated.

For buyers considering an older property, a sewer-line inspection and evaluation of the water service can provide additional information beyond a conventional home inspection.

For existing homeowners, investigating unexplained water usage, recurring sewer backups, slow drains, changes in water pressure or unexplained wet areas can help identify problems before they become more expensive.

"The most important thing homeowners can do is replace assumptions with information," said a representative of [J&J Plumbing Services](#). "The age of a home does not tell you exactly what condition its buried plumbing is in. A professional inspection can help identify whether a particular water or sewer line is functioning normally, showing signs of deterioration, or should be evaluated further."

Another company representative added:

"Underground plumbing problems can remain out of sight until a leak, blockage or structural defect becomes significant. Evaluating these systems proactively can give homeowners a better understanding of their property's condition and help them make informed maintenance decisions."

About J&J Plumbing Services

J&J Plumbing Services is a Bakersfield-area plumbing company serving residential and commercial customers in Kern County. The company provides plumbing and drain-related



Natalio Pergis performing professional under-sink plumbing evaluations and repairs for residential clients in Kern County, ensuring reliable indoor water and drain performance.

services and assists property owners with diagnosing and addressing plumbing problems.

Property owners should consult appropriately licensed professionals for site-specific assessments, repair recommendations and estimates.

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