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## PLUMBING MAINTENANCE WITHOUT DESTRUCTIVE DIGGING: THE LATEST TRENCHLESS TECHNOLOGY

*By Jim Schuelke*

When an underground sewer pipe leaks, clogs or collapses, the cause can be as simple as tree roots. The problem for apartment and commercial property managers is that reaching the pipe to replace it once meant digging through concrete floors and the destruction of landscaping and parking lots. Thankfully the huge cost of restoration can be completely avoided by the latest “no dig” trenchless sewer repair technology.

“The main advantage of trenchless is that we can save lines that would otherwise have to be replaced, and we can do it all underground,” explains Jim Schuelke of trenchless specialists Schuelke Plumbing. “It’s less disruptive for residents of the property and the cost savings for property owners are significant.”

### SAVING PIPES UNDERGROUND

There are two main technologies involved in repairing or replacing pipes underground. The first involves hydraulically pulling a pipe-bursting head through the old pipe, while a replacement pipe is pulled in behind. This saves digging a trench to replace the whole line. The second technology is epoxy relining. Here the inside of the pipe is relined with an epoxy resin, which is then cured into place to provide a hard shell – and a solid pipe within a pipe. This means that often the original line can be saved or even partially repaired.

Which system to use depends on a range of circumstances. “Each trenchless system has its advantages depending on the type of damage to the existing line, access, and the length of line to be replaced,” Jim Schuelke continues. “It’s best to have a choice of all the systems at your disposal then you’re able to take care of every repair situation.”

### SAVING PROPERTY

Beyond solving sewer line issues with brand new piping, the additional advantage of trenchless solutions lies in the lack of “collateral damage”. The sewer lines may run under units, concrete floors, landscaping, paths and parking lots. Not having to dig them up and replace them is where property owners save even more.

“Property managers are always impressed that we’re often able to access and reline hundreds of feet of sewer pipe through toilet access without having to tear open the floor,” says Jim.

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## **FINDING THE SOURCE OF SEWER ISSUES**

Before a sewer line can be repaired, it's necessary to diagnose the source of the issue. Again, the latest technology can help. Plumbers are able to put a fiber-optic camera down the sewer so that they can see inside the line and identify common issues such as misalignment, clogs, root intrusion and collapses. They're also able to identify the sources of leaks above ground with leak detection technology. The result is being able to pin-point the exact source of the issue for the most efficient repair, again without unnecessary digging.

"One of the technologies we use at Schuelke Plumbing is FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) which enables us to visualize the leak on video through the ground. It's the same technology they use to fly military aircraft in all weather conditions as it shows the infrared energy through objects."

## **PREVENTING SEWER ISSUES**

It's no surprise that having to replace or repair a sewer line can often be averted with preventative maintenance. If the property suffers frequent clogs or odor issues, or has trees, or is already known to have older pipes it can make good sense to have your sewer lines inspected for issues. Many plumbing companies will inspect the pipes as a courtesy in conjunction with other work, or as part of putting together a comprehensive preventative maintenance plan for your apartment complex or commercial property.

"There are many times we've saved a complex's sewer line with a simple check," Schuelke explains. "Roots in the line can be cleared before they become a bigger problem, or a patch repair undertaken before a more serious problem occurs. Many of the trenchless repair jobs we do could have been avoided with a preventative inspection of the line."

*Schuekle Plumbing is a family owned business in the Los Angeles area. Jim and his twin brother David are leaders in the trenchless plumbing arena. You can reach Jim at 800-715-1460 or [www.twinplumbing.com](http://www.twinplumbing.com)*