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A Message from the American Concrete Pipe Association

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Consultants 'Run for Cover' When Fiberglass Sewer Pipe Fails

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BROOKINGS, S.D. - Sections of Brighton Road in Brookings, S.D., have caved in twice in 1996 because of a cracked fiberglass sewer line. A 20-year-old woman was injured in April when erosion from the cracked sewer line caused the road to collapse under her 1994 Ford Thunderbird, according to the Argus Leader, a major newspaper in Sioux Falls, S.D. The driver of the car suffered a concussion and multiple contusions.

The second incident occurred in late May when prematurely cracked pipes eroded another section of Brighton Road, collapsing the street and creating a hole 15-feet deep that closed two roads. Fortunately, the cave-in was discovered and the road closed before any accidents took place. Traffic in that area was rerouted around the site.

The Argus Leader quoted Andy Jensen, utility manager for Brookings Municipal Utilities, as saying the sewer line was examined with a mini-camera "and the pipes were cracked and ready to cave in." The paper went on to say that the cracks appeared on the top of the fiberglass pipes and allowed dirt and gravel to seep into the sewage that was pumped to the city's wastewater treatment plant.

Jensen confirmed that about 4,500 feet of fiberglass pipe would have to be replaced at a cost of about \$600,000. It appears the city will have to shoulder the cost of the repair. The paper quoted Jensen as saying that the pipe had been installed in 1979 and that it shouldn't be ruined already. "I think sewer pipe should last 50 years," he said.

Jensen also told the publication that legal actions against the pipe suppliers is possible. However, the Argus Leader reported that "Those connected with (the pipe) installation can't be found." David Nelson, a local developer familiar with the initial installation, was more blunt in describing the situation. He reportedly told the newspaper that consultants who approved the sewer line design are "in the bushes" and that "everyone's run for cover."