

Council to replace old pipes

HEINZ DE BOER

TEAMS of “pipe crackers” will begin work in the Durban central/CBD region early next year to replace kilometres of old asbestos cement piping that has been blamed for costing ratepayers R285 million in lost water each year.

By using equipment to crack the existing pipes before replacing them with modern PVC plastic piping, contractors participating in the R850 million project will avoid digging up roads and pavements.

But other residential neighbourhoods may not be so lucky, and trenches to lay the new piping could appear soon.

Most of eThekweni’s neighbourhoods will be affected by the project that engineers hope

will reduce bursts and leaks in the more than 2 800km of old piping being replaced. It is a project that will for the next 50 years help the council slash 10% off its water loss bill, which stands at 36%.

This means that of the almost R1 billion eThekweni pays to Umgeni Water each year, at least 36% is lost through leaks, faulty meter readings or water theft.

Savings realised from replacing the pipes will pay off the R850 million spent within three years.

Apart from the financial implications, the saving in water will also help Durban sidestep potential water rationing as water stocks diminish nationally. Rationing would have to be implemented within two years

if the city did not crack down on water loss within two years.

The project would also have a positive economic spin off for the 16 smaller sub contractors, who have been mentored and empowered by working with the four main contractors on the project. By the end of the project at least 12 000 people would have been employed by contractors, who would take about three months to replace pipes in each reservoir zone.

Workers involved in the replacement project can be identified by their yellow reflective jackets depicting a “pipe worm” wearing a hard hat, with the eThekweni municipal emblem in the background.

For information on replacement timetables, residents can call 080 131 3013.

