

# **Congratulations on the purchase of your Homes By Prairie Home!!!**

We are certain that you will enjoy your new home. By maintaining it properly, you will be able to contribute to the quality and beauty of your neighborhood, lower your cost for maintenance or replacement and maximize your resale value.

On the following pages you will find some helpful Homeowner Maintenance Tips, which will assist you in maintaining your new home.

This list is not all-inclusive; however, it will assist you in some of the basics and will answer many of the most common questions and issues that our homeowners have.

## Items Covered In This Manual:

- Heating and Cooling Systems
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Flooring
- Building Material Expansion and Contraction
- Caulking
- Painting and Staining
- Cabinets and Countertops
- Concrete
- Roofing
- Siding
- Garage Overhead Door
- Drainage/Landscaping
- Fireplaces
- Our Warranty Service Procedures

## HEATING AND COOLING

Maintenance tips provided by our **Heating Ventilation and Cooling (HVAC)** contractor.

Commonly asked questions and issues:

### AIR CONDITIONING:

Setting thermostat at 60 degrees will not cool your home any faster and can result in the unit “freezing up” and not performing at all, which can damage the unit.

Your air conditioner is a closed system, which means that the interior air is continually recycled and cooled until the desired temperature is reached. You can help your air conditioning system by closing your drapes to keep direct sun light out and keep the exterior doors and windows shut.

If your air conditioner does not seem to be cooling your house, check the air filter. A plugged air filter will significantly reduce your units cooling capacity.

Keep unit free of all foreign matter; grass clippings, straw, etc.

### HEATING:

If you find yourself with no heat, the following may help identify the cause. It will also be helpful for you to review the Manufacturer’s Warranty Booklet for additional help.

1. Check thermostat temperature setting
2. Check ON/OFF switch on furnace – check Manufacturer’s book for location
3. Check breaker on the electrical panel
4. Check safety switch located on the furnace.

If none of these fix your problem, call the HVAC contractor directly, but remember if your heating contractor makes a service call to turn on a switch or reset a breaker, you will be obligated to pay a service charge. Your contractor is only responsible for the installation warranty while the equipment is warranted by the manufacturer.

**GENERAL NOTE:** Registers are preset by your technician to properly balance the airflow in each room. In two story homes, **DO NOT ADJUST THE REGISTERS.** This could lead to hot or cold spots in your house, which would not be covered under the warranty, and you would be obligated to pay the service charge. If room temperatures vary greatly from one to the other, call the HVAC contractor so they can adjust the air flow to the rooms.

## PLUMBING, GAS AND SEWER

To insure against plumbing problems, observe the following guidelines:

Many plumbing clogs are caused by improper garbage disposal use. Always use plenty of cold water when running the disposal. Allow the water to run 10 to 15 seconds after shutting off the disposal.

If the disposal overheats, the unit will trip off to protect itself. If this happens, turn the on/off switch off. Use the provided allen wrench to break the unit loose. Visually inspect inside the unit. Remove any objects before removing the allen wrench. There is a reset button located on the bottom of the garbage disposal. Push the reset button to reset the unit. Turn the disposal on at the wall switch and resume use. IF disposal fails to work, call the plumber.

Outside faucets **MUST** be shut off during freezing weather and the hose must be removed.

Provided your home is heated at a normal level during normal winter temperatures, your pipes should not freeze. Heat should be set at 65 degrees minimum when you are away during winter months. If temperatures are below normal (below 20 degrees), you should open cabinet doors to allow heat to the pipes and let the faucets trickle to keep the pipes from freezing.

Any uninsulated pipes exposed in garage should be insulated. This is considered part of normal Homeowner Maintenance. It will also help to keep your overhead garage door closed as much as possible during extremely cold weather (below 20 degrees).

In the event of a leak or broken pipe, shut off the water to that fixture as soon as possible and call your plumber. Each sink and commode has a shut off valve for its water supply or use the main water shut off if necessary. PLEASE NOTE: *Having to shut off the water to an isolated item in the home (such as one toilet) is not considered an emergency.*

If your water supply stops completely, first check the water shut off at the front of the house or garage. Next, check with the water company to confirm the service has not been shut down in your area. If this is not the problem, please call the service department during normal business hours or the plumber direct after hours.

## Gas Piping

There is a shut off valve on the gas line at or near its connection to each item that operates on gas. **If you suspect a gas leak, leave the home immediately and call the gas company immediately for emergency service.**

Your gas hot water heater has a pilot light. If this should go out, relighting the pilot light is considered normal homeowner maintenance. Lighting instructions are located on the water heater.

## Sewer and Drain Lines

All of your sewer and drain lines should operate freely and have been inspected by the local building department. If a sewer or drain line becomes clogged, repair is required. Should an emergency problem develop with your sewer or drain lines and you have determined that the clogging is not a result of a blockage caused by improper disposal or other homeowner maintenance problem, you should call the plumber immediately.

Preventive maintenance is the best safeguard against clogged drains or sewer lines. Clogs are generally caused by the improper disposal of waste materials. It is very important to follow the manufacturers' guidelines regarding the use of garbage disposals and do not flush excessive amounts of waste when using your bathroom toilets. The use of a plunger can facilitate the clearing of minor clogs, and if you use a chemical agent, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully to avoid personal injury.

On January 1, 1995 the building codes now call for 1.6 gallon capacity toilets for water conservation. This may result in additional flushes needed to properly dispose of waste.

## ELECTRICAL

Commonly asked questions and issues:

The master control panel that contains the electrical breakers for your home includes a “Main” shut off that controls all the power to your home. In addition to the Main breaker switch, individual breakers control the separate circuits to your home. These individual breakers have three positions: ON, OFF, and TRIPPED.

If you lose power to a specific portion of your home, check the individual circuit breakers in the control panel. If any breaker is in the TRIPPED position, first flip it to the “OFF” position and then it can be turned “ON”. Switching the breaker from the “TRIPPED” position directly to the “ON” position will not restore electrical power.

If you experience a total loss of electrical power to your home:

1. Check the main breaker in the master control panel discussed above.
2. Next, check with your local utility company to see if the problem is with the source of electrical power supplied to your home.

If a wall outlet is not working, check to see if it is controlled by a wall switch. Also check to be certain that the light bulb or appliance being used is working.

Your home’s electrical system also contains **Ground Fault Interrupter Circuits**, commonly called **GFI receptacles**, as a safeguard against excessive moisture and heavy appliance use. Faulty appliances, especially hair dryers, are a common cause of tripped GFI receptacles. GFI receptacles have a RESET button directly on the receptacle. If power is lost simply press the RESET button. These GFI receptacles are located in one or more of the following areas; garage, hall bath, master bath and kitchen. If you have a two story home there will be one in your powder room as well. Please note that if two bathrooms are located on the same floor, one GFI receptacle may control both bathrooms.

A refrigerator or freezer cannot be plugged into a GFI outlet. When the compressor kicks on, it may trip the breaker. A dedicated freezer plug needs to be used for these appliances.

If any of your circuit breakers continue to trip, unplug all items connected to it and then reset the breaker. If the circuit then remains on, one of the items you had connected may be defective.

Your smoke detector has a built-in beeping device that indicates power loss. Your smoke detectors have battery backups. When power is re-established, it will again beep to let you know that the power has been re-established. You should test the smoke detector monthly by pushing the test button until the alarm goes off. Batteries in detectors should be changed on a yearly basis.

Only use the recommended wattage for light bulbs in your fixtures. Each fixture has a sticker indicating the maximum wattage to use. Failure to follow this can lead to burning out your fixture or even worse, a fire.

Your home is pre-wired for cable television. The location of the service connection is outside, on the bottom wall plate, next to where your electrical service enters your home.

If you have a ceiling fan rough-in, the black wire is for the fan motor and the red wire is for an optional light kit for ceiling fans. You need to properly anchor the fan to the box. Failure to do so could result in the fan falling down. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this, please consult your electrician.

Do not hang a ceiling fan on a regular ceiling light box. Ceiling light boxes are not designed to carry the weight of a ceiling fan.

## **FLOORING**

Information and care on your vinyl and carpet.

Commonly asked questions and issues:

### **Vinyl:**

- Scratches, cuts and tears in the vinyl that occur after your Customer Orientation Walk-through are the homeowner's responsibility.
- High heels should not be worn while walking on vinyl flooring as this will cause dimples.
- Please **DO NOT** use rubber-backed rugs on your vinyl. The petroleum base in the backing will discolor your vinyl.
- Indentation damage from furniture is not a warrantable item.

### **Carpet:**

- Use entrance mats.
- Vacuum regularly
- Blot up spills immediately.
- Clean periodically.
- See enclosed Scotchgard Protection Carpet Care Guide.

## **BUILDING MATERIAL EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION**

Most building material will expand and contract subject to changes in temperature and humidity.

All materials do not expand and contract at the same rate and the result may be cracks in the drywall and paint, and separations between materials. This is very normal in new home construction. Shrinkage of the wood and drywall material in your home is inevitable, and it will be most noticeable during the first year. However, generally all that is needed is a small cosmetic repair, sometimes involving only minor caulking.

Homes By Prairie will do **one** drywall touch up after closing, usually at the one-year inspection. You can request to have it done earlier, but we suggest that you wait and allow the home to go through the entire one year settling process.

### Framing

Building materials are designed with the notion that they will probably get wet at one time or another.

## CAULKING

It is the responsibility of the homeowner to properly maintain the caulking throughout the home. This is especially critical in the bathrooms. If you have ceramic tile, any grout that is cracking should be immediately repaired with a good tub and tile caulk.

There are three types of caulk:

1. Silicone caulk – Caulking that is 100% silicone will not accept paint, but works best where water is present.
2. Latex caulk – Latex caulking is appropriate for an area that requires painting.
3. Latex caulk with silicone- This is the most suitable for all areas.

If you have brick on your home, it is very important that the caulking around the windows be checked yearly and re-caulked with clear silicone caulking if necessary. If this is not maintained, you will experience air filtration and water damage over time, which is not covered by Homes By Prairie's warranty.

Please remember that even properly installed interior and exterior caulk, over time, will eventually require replacement by the homeowner. All caulking due to normal settling of structure is considered homeowner maintenance. All areas requiring caulking should be checked yearly.

## **PAINTING AND STAINING**

Paint touch up after your Customer Orientation Walk-Through, as well as your one-year drywall touch-up, is the homeowner's responsibility.

Check the surface of your home's exterior annually. If you can repair paint or caulking before there is much wearing away of the original finish, you will save the cost of extensive surface preparation.

Separation of trim from the adjacent material is the normal result of shrinkage, which can require caulking and/or touch-up painting as a repair. This is a homeowner maintenance responsibility.

## **CABINETS AND COUNTERTOPS**

Commonly asked questions and issues:

- Backsplashes and countertops will need to be caulked from time to time. This is a homeowner maintenance responsibility.
- If you remove the adjustable shelves, please remember to put the shelf clips back in the proper way. Failure to do so can result in the shelf failing and damages to the contents and the cabinets themselves.

## CONCRETE

Please find the Homes By Prairie concrete policy that was presented to you at your Pre-Construction meeting.

Please remember the following items:

1. Clean off IMMEDIATELY any calcium chloride, salt, fertilizer or other similar chemicals on your exterior concrete.
2. NEVER use materials containing ammonium sulfate or ammonium nitrate on your exterior concrete.
3. Use caution when using ice and snow removal agents. Read carton to ensure proper application.
4. Seal your exterior concrete and garage floor at least every other year.
5. Do not allow heavy trucks to drive on your driveway. Major cracking may result.
6. Do not alter the grading around your driveway.
7. Only cracks greater than ¼" wide and more than 30% of the perimeter length of a panel will be repaired or replaced.
8. Major popouts of more than 50 or more conical breakouts per 100 square feet of exterior concrete will be repaired or replaced.
9. Major scaling and spalling of more than 10% of total area or 25% of any panel will be repaired or replaced.
10. There is no color guarantee on exterior concrete.
11. Cracks will occur outside of control joints.
12. Most hardware stores carry a product called SL-1 sealant. This product is supplied in a tub-like container and can be applied to cracks with a caulking gun.

## **ROOFING**

Commonly asked questions and issues:

- After severe storms (with winds above 60 mph), inspect the roof for damage. Notify your homeowner's insurance agent if there is storm damage.
- Maintain the gutters and downspouts so that they are free of debris and will drain quickly. Inspecting gutters annually is highly recommended.

## **SIDING**

Enclosed please find the warranty and care and maintenance information from the siding manufacturer.

Commonly asked questions and issues:

- After severe storms (with winds above 50 mph), inspect the siding for damage. Notify your homeowner's insurance agent if there is storm damage.
- Vinyl siding is very brittle in winter conditions. Avoid banging or bumping of siding in extremely cold conditions.
- Please keep grills away from vinyl siding as heat from grill can melt siding.
- Vinyl siding expands and contracts with temperature changes. This can cause temporary waviness in the siding.
- Use care around siding when mowing your yard. Siding can be punctured if hit by debris from mower.
- Do not throw balls against siding. While the siding will not dent, if hit in the right place, it can crack.

## **OVERHEAD GARAGE DOOR**

WARNING: USE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN WORKING NEAR COUNTER BALANCE SYSTEM.

WARNING: IMPROPER INSTALLATION OF GARAGE DOOR OPENERS CAN RESULT IN DAMAGE TO YOUR OVERHEAD DOOR, AS WELL AS VOIDING YOUR MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY.

Opening or closing you door quickly (or hard) can lead to damage of your door and will void your warranty.

## **DRAINAGE/LANDSCAPING**

Enclosed please find the Homes By Prairie landscaping policy that was presented to you at your Pre-Construction meeting.

Commonly asked questions and issues:

- Grading has been done to facilitate water run off. The homeowner is responsible for maintaining grades and swales in order to ensure proper drainage away from the house. However, altering existing grades or swales may cause foundation damage.
- If you have any questions or concerns, contact your professional lawn care expert for information.
- Sink holes that occur after closing will be the homeowners responsibility.

## **FIREPLACES**

Enclosed please find manufacturer information about your fireplace.

Commonly asked questions and issues:

- NEVER burn charcoal or coal in your fireplace.
- Remember to open the flue prior to lighting a fire.
- Light a piece of paper and hold it high inside the fireplace. This will warm the flue and start the chimney drawing.
- Use proper size of wood in your fireplace. Use dry and well-seasoned wood. DO NOT burn scrap construction lumber, as it produces excessive sparks.
- Be careful not to smother the fire.
- A fireplace needs a steady supply of air in order to draw properly. Homes built today are well sealed and can lack sufficient air for normal operation. You may need to open a window in order to maintain an effective draft. If you lose the draft, the flow of air can be reversed and caused the fireplace to smoke.
- The fireplace should be inspected and cleaned regularly, to prevent creosote residue build-up..
- The brick-like refractory on the floor, back and sides is reinforced with steel, but can be cracked and broken. DO NOT drop logs or build fires directly against refractories.
- **WARNING: GAS FIREPLACES EQUIPPED WITH DOORS SHOULD BE OPERATED ONLY WITH DOORS FULLY OPEN OR DOORS FULLY CLOSED. IF DOORS ARE LEFT PARTLY OPEN, GAS AND FLAME MAY BE DRAWN OUT OF THE FIREPLACE OPENING, CREATING RISKS OF BOTH FIRE AND SMOKE.**
- Keep all combustibles, such as furniture, draperies, papers and stored wood away from the front of the fireplace.
- Homes By Prairie strongly recommends that you install Carbon Monoxide detector before moving into your new home.

## HOMES BY PRAIRIE'S WARRANTY SERVICE PROCEDURES

Our goal is to build a home free of defects, but we know that oversights occur and we will correct those that are covered by our warranty.

The Homes By Prairie Warranty Service Procedures are outlined below:

For emergency service on mechanical systems (heating, cooling, plumbing or electrical) call the contractor directly. You will receive a list of emergency phone numbers at closing. Please review what is considered an emergency before calling.

Homes By Prairie will conduct two walk-through sessions with you during the first year in your new home.

The first will be a sixty (60) day walk-through that your Homes By Prairie Service Tech will call to schedule. This is to identify any warrantable items that are noticed after you moved in, which were not apparent during your Customer Orientation Walk-through.

The second walk through will be at one year anniversary of closing. This is for drywall repairs due to house settling. Homes By Prairie will do all necessary drywall repairs. It is the homeowners' responsibility to sand and paint all drywall touch up. If ceiling repairs are needed, drywall color may not match.

If any warrantable problem becomes apparent between the 60-day and one year walk-throughs, we provide at closing a service request form for you to fill out and mail into our office. Please describe the problem in detail so that we may send the appropriate person to make the repairs.

After we receive your service request form or have completed our 60-day or one year walk-throughs, Homes By Prairie or one of our contractors will call you for an appointment. Work is performed Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please make arrangements to be home at the scheduled appointment time, or leave a key with a neighbor or at our office prior to any scheduled appointment.

- We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for choosing Homes by Prairie, and we honestly hope that your experience with us was and will continue to be enjoyable. We welcome your comments regarding the home building process, and because many of our customers come to us by referral, we hope you feel comfortable sending your friends to see us.