

HOUSE WALK THROUGH VERIFICATION

*To be completed and turned into Rice County
Habitat for Humanity, Executive Director*

Homeowner _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Person who went through Manual with homeowner _____

Date _____



Home Owner
Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You are ready to move into your new Habitat house, ready to make it a home. The volunteers have all left, it has been checked, it has been inspected, you've completed your walk-through, and now it's all yours. This is probably the first time you have owned your own home, and it's an exciting time in your life. This is probably the largest investment you will make in your life. The good people at Habitat have been able to answer a lot of your questions; they have helped you through the financial process, the closing, and have explained the basic components of your house. This all happened so fast and now you may have more questions. Now what? Well, take it easy. Habitat wants you to enjoy your new home and will always be there to help in any way possible. That's why we've written this manual. Please take some time to go through this handout AND USE IT! Store it in a safe spot and refer to it when you have a problem.

Being a Good Neighbor

Think of your new living situation as a great opportunity to get involved and get to know the people who live near you. You will also want to be a good neighbor yourself-- someone others will be happy living near because of the pride you show in your home and the consideration you have for individuals.

Neighbor Relations

It is always more pleasant to live in a community where people like and help each other. To make that happen, you can be proactive by taking the following steps:

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors.
- Pitch in and help neighbors in need. If your neighbor's car battery is dead, maybe you could offer a jump start; or, if an elderly couple lives nearby, perhaps you could shovel the walkway to their home after removing the snow from yours. Simple, friendly gestures go a long way toward forming good neighbor relations.
- Always respect your neighbors' rights. Let them know you are willing to talk through any problems.
- Consider organizing a neighborhood watch program on your block. Your local police department can give you details to get started.
- Join your neighborhood or homeowner association, if there is one. Help shape the decisions that affect your community.

Pets

As a homeowner, you have the right to own pets. Dogs, cats, birds and other animals can be wonderful companions. Some animals, like dogs, also can discourage burglars. But untrained or ill-kept animals can ruin relationships with neighbors and damage your home. No one wants to live near someone whose dog is barking constantly or breaking loose to knock over and rummage through garbage cans. And poor training or care is not fair to the animal, either.

Before getting an animal, know what it will take to make it a good member of your family and your neighborhood. Are you willing to devote the kind of time and money it will take? Will you train your animal? Will you supervise the animal's behavior with visitors or small children? Will you see to proper housing, food and medical care for the animal? If you can't honestly answer "yes" to these questions, then wait until you can do so before adding an animal to your family.

Zoning Laws

Most neighborhoods have rules, or ordinances, that describe the structures and activities that are-or are not-allowed in an area. There also may be a homeowners' group that has rules you must follow. You need to know about these rules. Specifically, find out about these issues:

- The type of business you are allowed to run in your home.
- Regulations about renovations or additions, such as adding on rooms or a deck.
- Regulations about fencing

HOME SAFETY

When you are a homeowner, the safety of you, your family, and your home is your responsibility. Safety in the home does not take a lot of time or a lot of special knowledge. Safety in the home does, however, require your serious attention—and it could save your life and the lives of those living with you. North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity strongly encourages you to become familiar with safety procedures and resources.

In order to help you maintain your household in a safe condition, Habitat has developed the following **safety checklist** beginning on the next page. You should go through the checklist at least four times a year (smoke detectors must be checked monthly) to make sure you have followed all the safety tips.

Feel free to add your personal safety issues or concerns to this list but we do not recommend taking any items off this list, as we feel it represents the very minimum of what is required to keep your home safe. This checklist has been kept simple so that it will be easy to use.

This section also includes a list of Home Safety Resources. These agencies exist for your use and protection; it is recommended that you sit down with your mentor and fill in all the necessary phone numbers on the list.

BUDGETING

A Visual Guide to How Small Cutbacks Lead to Great Savings

Don't be discouraged by the word "budgeting" — it doesn't mean your wallet is an inflexible medium which must be split into appropriately sized "pie slices." Your budget is actually able to expand and stretch in surprising ways. Many daily and so-called "small" purchases add up from chump change to wads of cash over the course of a year. In fact, a household could **save more than \$8,800 a year** by adopting the following suggestions. Here's a closer look at frivolous spending and some convenient alternatives that can save you a lot of money in the long run.



Insulate your home!
Almost 45% of a homeowner's utility bill goes toward heating and cooling.

ATTIC

Environmentally friendly CFL bulbs are both cheaper and longer lasting than standard 100 watt bulbs.

A house using 20 bulbs will **save \$150 a year** by switching to CFL bulbs, and simultaneously reduce their carbon dioxide emissions by 1,877 pounds.

Regular bulb	CFL bulb	Savings:
\$10.99 for 8,000 hours	\$2.53 for 8,000 hours	\$8.46 per bulb

BEDROOM

The average U.S. family spends **\$1,881** on clothing annually.

- Consider shopping at **Goodwill**; you can often find high-end items normally priced around \$75, for as little as **\$2 to \$5**.
- When shopping, **peruse cheaper stores** first before visiting the more-expensive ones. **Lose the brand obsession** — looking good overrules the name on the tag.
- Buy clothes out of season.** Shop for bathing suits at the end of the summer or coats at the end of winter. Many out-of-season products are marked down between **30%-70%**.

Invest in a programmable thermostat and never forget to adjust the temperature.

Keeping the temperature at **68°F** (winter), **78°F** (summer) could save you **\$400-\$500** per year.

BATHROOM

A low-flow showerhead will save about **\$15** a year.

Cleaning supplies
By switching from name-brand to generic, your yearly average cost of \$639 can be **cut to \$384**.

A 20oz or 32oz bottle filled with water and placed in the toilet tank will reduce water use. Each flush is about one cent, roughly **\$48 a year**.

Home or indoor gardens can **save up to \$10 a week** vs. grocery produce.

KITCHEN

Make your own coffee
A cup of joe at a corner café can run **\$3**. Coffee addicts can spend up to **\$30/week**, **\$120/month** or **\$1,440/year**. Home-brewed coffee costs about **50 cents a pot** (2-4 cups).

Morning routine
Eating fast-food breakfast every weekday morning: **\$25 per week**. Fixing a breakfast burrito or eggs at home: **50 cents a day**, a **\$1,000+** a year savings.

Kick the soda habit
\$6/case of soda each week = **\$312 a year**.

Comparison shop local grocery stores. Typical savings: **\$20 a week** (or **\$1,040 a year**) just for basic essentials and produce. The average U.S. family spends **\$3,465 a year** on food at home.

DINING ROOM

The average person spends **\$2,668 a year** eating out twice a week, and about **\$450 a year** in alcohol consumption.

Limit yourself to eating and drinking out once a week and **save more than \$1,500 a year**.

Hold potluck dinners and drink in with friends. Now you're **not** paying/tipping for someone else's services.

Air conditioner Well-maintained ones cost about **\$550 for 3 years**. Poorly maintained ones cost **nearly double**.

LIVING ROOM

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN FAMILY SPENDS \$2,698 A YEAR ON ENTERTAINMENT

Premium cable channels cost **\$35 a month**, Netflix costs **\$20 a month**, but the library is **free!**

A **\$40 LCG4** electrical strip can be used to cut power to several appliances with just one click.

Appliances sap electricity even when turned off.

- Laptop charger wastes **\$1.50 a month**.
- 15 devices using 5 watts/hour each wastes **\$3 a month**.

HOME OFFICE

Scrutinize your monthly bills. What don't you use?

- Cell phone**
Cutting an unused unlimited service (Internet access, text messaging, etc.) **saves \$20 per month each**.
- Cut the landline and **save \$240 a year**, even more if you factor in long distance charges.
- You could pay **\$360 a year** for a gym membership, or exercise at home for **free!**
- Time to quit smoking? **5 packs a week = \$1,800 a year**

Energy Star models cost **up to 50% less** than old or inefficient models.

BASEMENT

Insulating your hot water heater with a heat blanket can **save up to \$50 a year**.

Remember to leave holes for the temperature gauges as to not void your warranty.

Keeping your water heater at a comfortable **110°F** can save **\$40 a year**.

GARAGE

Gasoline and motor oil costs an average of **\$2,384 a year**.

If your commute is 25-miles round-trip, carpooling for half that time over 50 weeks will **save \$570 a year**.

You should have your oil changed every 3,000 miles.

Over four years/50,000 miles, the average driver is looking at about 16 changes.

A typical garage charges **\$25 per change = \$400**. If you do it yourself, **\$10 per change = \$160**.



BASIC HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Emergency and Alert Plans

1. ____ Develop fire and disaster escape plans and procedures and make sure everyone in the house understands them.
2. ____ Make sure all exits open easily and are clear of obstacles.
3. ____ Make sure everyone in the house understands the 9-1-1 emergency phone system and the numbers are posted on all phones.
4. ____ Make sure all family members recognize the smell of natural gas, and that they all know where your shutoff is in case of a leak.
5. ____ Make sure your house numbers are at least four inches high, and are posted on the front of the house.

Fire Prevention

1. ____ Install smoke detectors on each floor and test them every month to make sure they are in working condition.
2. ____ Have at least one fire extinguisher in the house (preferably in the kitchen).
3. ____ Make sure all family members understand that a grease fire should be smothered with a pan lid or powder. Never pour water on a grease fire; that just makes it worse.
4. ____ Store all flammable liquids properly outdoors in approved containers away from appliances, heaters, or open flame.
5. ____ Make sure all areas are free from accumulated trash, particularly materials that can burn.
6. ____ Do not use un-vented space heaters.

7. ____Keep portable heaters away from paper, bedding, clothes, and curtains. Shut them off when family members are out of the house or asleep.
8. ____Do not allow smoking in bed; provide deep ashtrays where smoking is allowed.

Electrical

1. ____Make sure all appliances are approved by an independent testing agency (UL) and are in good working condition.
2. ____Make sure the house is free of extension cords. When overloaded or frayed, they are dangerous.
3. ____Make sure all electrical outlets and switches have cover plates and that plastic child protector covers are installed.
4. ____Test Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) electrical outlets in the bathroom to make sure that they are in good working condition.
5. ____Make sure the electrical system is free of frequent circuit breaker trips.
6. ____Make sure everyone understands that electrical appliances are not to be used near water (tubs, sinks, pools, etc.) or outdoors unless they are designed for such use. (If the inside of an appliance does get wet, have it serviced.)

Child Safety

1. ____Label poisons and medicines and store them out of the reach of children.
2. ____Turn pot handles away from the edge of the stove so they cannot get knocked off the stove or pulled down by small children.
3. ____Keep matches and lighters where small children cannot reach them.
4. ____Keep kitchen utensils and sharp tools where small children cannot reach them.

5. ____ Keep floors and stairs clear of toys.
6. ____ Don't leave children unattended in the bathtub.

Security Precautions

Your Home

- Keep your doors locked even when you're inside. Outside doors should have deadbolts for extra safety. In nearly one-half of home burglaries, intruders enter through an unlocked door or patio door.
- Install window locks in window frames so you can still open windows while you are at home where the openings will not be large enough for a burglar to crawl in. For sliding windows, you may want to use a metal or wooden bar on the bottom track for additional protection.
- Thieves generally target homes with poor outdoor lighting. Replace burned-out outdoor lights promptly and/or install outdoor light fixtures with built-in motion detectors. You may want to leave your front light on overnight.
- Many people hide spare keys in spots that are obvious to burglars. Because there are few places that won't be obvious, it is probably best not to leave a spare key outside your home.

When you are away from your home:

Whenever you are away from home, whether for a short or long period, make your home seem occupied:

- If you go on vacation, have your mail and newspaper services stopped.
- Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to check on your house every few days – ESPECIALLY IN THE WINTER! Give a friend or neighbor a key to your house to make sure your heat stays on so your pipes don't freeze.
- Use timers on interior lights, radios, and/or televisions to give the appearance of activity.
- If you leave your home for just the night, leave a few lights on. Do not just leave a hallway or corner light on; this can be a signal to burglars that no one is home.
- Do not tell callers on your outgoing message that you will be away from home.

HOME ENERGY MAINTENANCE

One of the best ways to have an energy efficient home is to make sure that the mechanical systems (heating, electrical, plumbing) in your home run as smoothly as possible. Read about home maintenance in this section of the manual and any outside sources to find information about how to take care of the mechanical systems of your house.

The biggest part of your energy bill comes from heating your home. Not having enough insulation, or having leaking windows and doors, can be a very serious problem. Read the following tips on caulking, weather stripping, thermostat control, and insulating to help keep your home energy efficient.

ENERGY SAVING TIPS

1. Set your thermostat around 68 degrees, the temperature that NSP recommends for top energy efficiency. Each degree you lower your thermostat can save 3% on fuel consumption. For example, lowering your thermostat from 72 degrees to 68 degrees can save 12% on your total fuel bill. Turn the thermostat down if you will be away for an extended period of time.
2. If you feel cool in the house, dress in layers before turning up the thermostat.
3. Use an electric blanket at night if you turn down the thermostat. A blanket costs just pennies to run per night and is much less expensive than heating your whole house.
4. Close off unoccupied rooms and shut off the heat vents to those rooms.
5. On cool days keep your curtains and shades open in sunny windows during the day and close them at night.

Staying Cool in the Summertime

1. To cool a single room, use a window fan to draw cool outside air into the room at night.
2. If you install a window air conditioner, keep drapes and furniture away to allow the air to flow freely. Change or clean your air conditioner filter monthly when in use.
3. Close blinds and window shades on the sunny side of your home to keep out heat from the sun.
4. Shade west and east windows by planting trees.

5. Cook summer meals on top of the range or outdoors on a grill, not in the oven.

Heat System Checks

1. Clean or change the filters in forced air furnaces every month during the heating months. Write the filter size on furnace for convenience.
2. Clean your registers and check ducts for loose fittings or supports.
3. Check the hot water systems for leaks around boiler and pipe fittings. Check each radiator to keep the system operating at peak efficiency.
4. Lubricate/oil pumps or fan motors according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
5. Check the furnace fan belt. Look for cracks or frayed edges. If you have any doubts, replace the belt.
6. Check your wall thermostat to make sure it's not clogged with dust.
7. Do not block radiators or vents with furniture, curtains, or other obstructions.
8. Use foil faced reflectors behind radiators to maximize energy usage and to save money.
9. Have a service person give your furnace a tune-up every few years to increase efficiency.

Kitchen Energy

1. Make sure the refrigerator door gaskets are tight to prevent warm air from getting in.
2. Vacuum the condenser coils on your refrigerator regularly to keep them clean.
3. Keep the refrigerator set at 40 degrees and the freezer at 0 degrees. Defrost when the ice is ¼" thick
4. When you get things from the refrigerator, open and shut the door quickly. Know what you want before you open the door. Do not browse.
5. Make sure your oven gasket seal is tight.
6. When cooking, turn off the oven and surface burners early. Let the heat finish the job.
7. Use microwaves or toaster ovens for smaller jobs.

Bathroom Energy

1. Take short showers rather than baths.
2. Use low-flow shower heads to conserve water and the energy used to heat it.

3. Make sure to turn on the fan when taking a shower or bath (to reduce moisture in the bathroom) and to turn it off when you're done.

Laundry Energy

1. Adjust the water level and wash time of your washer to match the clothes load.
2. Wash with cold or warm water to save on water heating. Rinse with cold water.
3. Use a clothesline or drying rack instead of a dryer.
4. If you do use a dryer, make sure the lint screen and exhaust line are both clean.
5. Dryers use less energy to get warmed up if loads are run one after another.

All-Around Energy Savers

1. Fix leaky toilets and faucets immediately (especially hot water).
2. Turn off the water while doing tasks at the sink. Do not let the water run while you wash your face, brush your teeth, shave, or do the dishes.
3. Turn off lights, TV sets and other appliances in vacant rooms.

HOME MAINTENANCE

Regular inspection and maintenance of your home will help you keep the house in good condition and maintain its value. Doing maintenance and repair as the need arises also keeps small problems from becoming bigger, more costly problems. Having and following a plan for home maintenance and repairs will make the job easier. And finally, a well-maintained house will be more comfortable for you and your family.

Hopefully you have already started putting money away in a special account designated specifically for unexpected repairs and maintenance that your home may need. If you have not yet done so, we highly recommend that you start an account immediately. You will be very grateful for this advice when it comes time to do your first repair.

Why is it necessary to do regular home maintenance?

- To maintain the value of the property.
- A well-maintained home usually sells more readily and usually brings a higher price.
- A well-maintained house is more comfortable.

- Regular care minimizes unexpected repair work and expense.
- Regular small repairs keep costs from becoming larger.

How often should maintenance and repairs be done?

- As soon as the need appears!
- The sooner the better, because it helps prevent further damage and keeps repair costs down.
- You should inspect your house and yard at least once every six months to identify any items needing work.

Who should perform the repairs?

- You can perform your own repairs, but only if you are confident you are doing them correctly. By doing your own repairs without careful attention and guidance, you could potentially make the problem worse than its original condition and the cost may become greater to have it professionally repaired.
- It is sometimes preferred and less expensive to hire someone to do the repair for you.

Ask around- family, friends, mentor, etc. to see who they would recommend to do the job. They may be able to refer you to the most reasonable and reliable repairperson in the area.

Home Maintenance Seasonal “To Do” Lists

Preventing Fires

- Check the smoke detectors every month and change batteries if needed.
- Check your CO (carbon monoxide) detector (if you don't have one, it is a small investment for your family's safety).
- Create an escape plan with your family in case of fire (and have practice drill!).
- Talk to your children about fire prevention.
- Do not store flammable items in your home. Make sure they are stored properly.
- Check your fire extinguisher (keep one in the kitchen, they are inexpensive).

Have Your Heat System Inspected

- With regular servicing of your heating system, you benefit by burning less fuel and a system that gets regular service is less likely to break down.

Have Your Boiler or Furnace System Serviced Regularly

- Be sure to read the manual.
- You can save yourself costly repair by just changing your furnace filter on a regular basis.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I repair a hole, dent or scratch in the wall?

The easiest products to use are premixed, lightweight spackling compounds, available in small plastic tubs or gallon sizes. If a small tub is sufficient, buying a small plastic tub is much more sensible since a five-gallon tub usually dries up quickly. Once you have the compound and have wiped the wall clean and allowed it to dry, you can apply the compound to the wall.

This should be done using a three-inch wide, flexible putty knife. Use smooth strokes to fill the crevice and to ensure that the spackle is sticking to the wall. Be neat and don't build up the spackle. Depending on the size of the dent or hole, it may take a while for the spackling compound to dry. If the spot is not filled in evenly once it dries, repeat the process and allow it to dry once again. After it has dried, use sandpaper to sand it very lightly and then coat over the area with paint to match the room.



How do I paint a room in my house?

Prior to painting, it is important to do all the necessary preparations to walls and rooms. First, move all furniture away from walls. Cover furniture and carpet with plastic to prevent paint drips. Wipe down walls to remove dirt, spider webs, etc. A clean surface to paint will create a much nicer finished product. Fill in any holes on walls with a spackling compound. Be sure this dries and is lightly sanded before painting. Then outline windows, base board, outlets, vents, etc. with masking tape to keep paint from getting on them. By spending time preparing for the project, you will spend much less time fixing your mistakes- preparation is very important!

Now you are ready to get started...

You want to start by buying a one-gallon bucket of paint (you may need more than one gallon depending on the size of the room), color of your choice. You will also want to get a roller pan and roller, paintbrush and small bucket. If the walls are a dark color right now, using a base paint or primer before applying

new color will be necessary. Ask the paint specialist at the store for help with choosing the best paint, primer (if needed), and tools you will need to paint.

You must mix all your paint before starting, to ensure the same color throughout the pail. Mixing with a long, wooden stick will help ensure that the paint is thoroughly mixed.

Attach a 4' (or so) wooden handle to your roller frame. It screws right in so you can paint the ceiling from the floor. If you don't have one of these extension rollers, the ceiling can be painted with a regular length roller from a ladder. Run your roller down into the paint and roll it over the grid on the roller pan to distribute the paint evenly. This also removes the excess paint and you will find that you have very little dripping. Work in 4' sections or so and apply the paint in a "W" pattern, then go back over it to distribute it evenly. It's a good idea on ceilings to roll in the direction of the window across from the entry door. This helps to hide any roller lines which may be introduced.

To paint the walls, you will want to "cut in" (paint with a brush) at the top where the wall meets the ceiling, around your doors, windows, baseboard trim, outlets, switches, etc. It's a good idea to do one wall at a time, cover the floor, cut in and then roll. This way the paint from the cut in is still wet and there is less chance of a color mismatch between brush and roller work.

Always keep a bucket of water or a damp cloth handy so you can clean up any spills or splatters while they are still wet.

***If I want to put up a towel bar in my bathroom, how do I find studs in the wall?
WITH ICF?***

Most wall studs are spaced sixteen inches on center (that means the distance from the center of one wall stud to the center of another is sixteen inches). You can purchase an electronic or magnetic stud finding device at a hardware store, or you can try these tips on locating the stud:

- Studs are located next to a window or door edge.
- Electric boxes are nailed to the sides of studs.
- Wallboard or sheetrock is nailed to studs. Look for seams.
- Baseboard is also nailed to studs. Look for nail holes around the baseboard.

- Move a magnetic compass or magnet on a string over a wall until the compass needle or magnet is attracted to the metal of the nails in the stud.

How do I unclog a sink drain?

The best time to unclog a sink drain is before the drain becomes completely blocked, so respond immediately to sink clogging. Follow these steps:

1. Start by using a plunger. To build up pressure, move the plunger up and down steadily 10 or 20 times. If you have a double sink be sure to block one side before plunging.
2. If the plunger doesn't work, try a "snake" on bathtubs, sinks, and showers. Snakes can be rented or bought at hardware stores. To be sure it's effective, keep the handle of the snake in the same direction when inserting and removing it.
3. If it seems that a plunger or snake helped loosen the clog, pouring boiling water down the drain may clear it. You can also try a drain cleaner.

*If none of these steps are successful in clearing the blockage, call a plumber.

How do I clean out the gutters?

Clean the gutters out after the leaves drop in both the fall and the spring. Get a ladder that is safe and climb up so you can see into the gutters. Move the ladder along the house as you pull all leaves and debris out of the gutters. Next, take a hose and flush the gutters out by running water through them. Make sure the gutters drain away from the house, so water is not leaking into the house. Also be sure to remove any leaves and debris from window wells- this is important for drainage and for escaping if necessary.

How do I clean a laminate floor?

The surface layer of laminate flooring is hard and compact, so dirt and dust do not stick to it easily. The following simple steps are usually all it takes to keep your floor clean.

- For general cleaning use a dust mop, the hard-floor attachment of your vacuum cleaner or wipe occasionally with a damp cotton (or cloth) mop.
- For heavier cleaning, use a laminate floor cleaner (available at hardware and household supply stores) or a mixture of household vinegar and water (1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of warm water) or household ammonia and water (1/2 cup ammonia to 1 gallon warm water). If an accident occurs and a stain remains, you can remove the worst stains with acetone or denatured alcohol on a soft cloth without bleaching or damaging the floor. In a pinch, nail polish remover containing acetone is a handy substitute. Do not use soap or

detergent-based cleaners, wax-based products or any type of polish on laminate floors, as they leave a dull, filmy residue.

- There is never a need to wax or refinish your laminate floor.

COMMON HOMEOWNER PROBLEMS – AND SOME SOLUTIONS

“We don’t have any heat.”

- Check if the thermostat is in the “on” position.
- Make sure the pilot light in your boiler or furnace is on. If it is not, follow the re-lighting instructions printed on the boiler or furnace. If it goes out repeatedly, call a qualified technician or heating contractor.

“Only cold water will come out of our faucets.”

- Check if the pilot light in your water heater has gone out. If it has, re-light according to manufacturer’s instructions, usually near the control on the lower part of the tank. If you have difficulty re-lighting the pilot, call a qualified service technician or heating contractor.

“No water will come out of our faucet.”

- Check to see if water will come out of other faucets. If it seems to be just one line of pipes, the intake valve for that faucet may have been turned off or, you may have a broken pipe. If it is all of your faucets, the water flow has probably been shut off for some reason.
- Check to see if the water line to that sink, tub, or toilet has been turned off.
- Check if your main water intake valve has been turned off.
- Is it possible that you have a frozen pipe?

“My toilet keeps running.”

- Take the tank cover off and check the shut-off float. If it has lifted too high, gently lower it until it stops the water at the correct level.
- Check to see if the rubber stopper is sealed to the bottom of the tank. If it is not, adjust the guide rod for a tight seal. Or, for older toilets, you may need to untangle the chain attached to the rubber stopper.

“Our walls and ceilings have developed discolored spots.”

- You could have a humidity problem. Make sure your air exchanger is functioning properly.

- If you notice this change during the winter, check for ice dams on your roof that might be causing a leak.
- You might have a leak in a pipe. These can be difficult to detect without the help of a plumber. You can look for obvious signs such as leaking noises or a sudden increase in the amount of your water bill.

“One of our water pipes is noisy.”

- Check to see if there is a loose part or worn washer in the faucet.
- If it is a hot water pipe, steam or air could be trapped in it, causing the pipes to be noisy. This may be because the temperature setting is too high, creating excess steam. Try lowering the temperature setting on your water heater.

“One of our water pipes is frozen.”

- Has your heat been shut off? If so, turn it back on.
- Has the area where the pipe froze been getting enough heat? For instance, is it in a room where the door has been shut and the registers closed? If so, begin to heat that area.
- Shut off main water supply. To prevent the pipe from bursting, immediately begin to slowly thaw it using a heat lamp or hair dryer.

“The electricity in our home has gone out.”

- Check if your neighbors’ electricity is also out. If so, the problem is probably outside of your home. Call your electric company and inform them of the problem.
- Perhaps your master electric circuit breaker has been tripped. If so, reset it by switching it to “off” position and then back to “on.” If you have to reset your master circuit breaker often, your circuit may be overloaded.
- If you continue to have problems with the flow of electricity to your home, call an electrician. You might have faulty wiring which is a serious problem that could cause a fire.

“I smell gas.”

- Leave your home immediately. Do not use electric switches, your own phone, or anything that could cause a spark.
- Go immediately to a neighboring home or building and call an emergency gas service for your area_____.
- Leave all repairs to properly equipped and trained utility technicians. Never try to repair a gas leak yourself.

“There is water in our basement.”

- Check the drainage around your house. The ground around your house should be sloped so water drains away from your house rather than into your basement.
- Be sure you haven't planted anything within three feet of your foundation.
- If your gutters or downspouts are clogged, clean them and make sure they direct the flow of water away from the house.

“We have developed cracks in our foundation.”

- Small cracks could be from normal expansion contraction of your home, especially if it is new. They can be easily repaired with patching cement.
- You may have a water problem in your basement. See above.

“There are small sawdust piles in our house.”

- You may have a pest problem such as carpenter ants. Call a pest control professional.

General Home Maintenance Tips

Carpet: It is important to vacuum regularly in order to keep your carpets looking good. One time a week should be sufficient, but more frequent vacuuming is suggested for dirt to high traffic areas such as entryway, hallways, etc. When dirt gets into the carpet it wears down the fibers. You can also protect your carpet by using furniture rests under heavy furniture.

If anything spills on your carpet, clean it immediately. First use a dry cloth to absorb any spills, then use water, club soda, or any appropriate carpet cleaners. Be sure to check any carpet cleaners in a concealed area before using in a visible spot. Fading or discoloration may occur.

Laminate Floors: Keep up with them by sweeping as often as possible, daily is recommended for pet owners. Be sure to clean up spills as soon as they occur to prevent staining or moisture. Never leave standing water on a laminate floor, the floor will start to lift up. Always investigate if you are getting water leaks. To prevent scuffing, use furniture rests under all furniture on your hard floors.

Bathtubs, Showers and Sinks: Be sure to always have the fan running or the window open while showering. This will help to avoid too much moisture build-up in your bathroom. Too much moisture will lead to mildew growth. To remove any mildew buildup, use a mildew remover then follow up with

disinfectant. It is smart to wipe down the walls of the shower after each use to help prevent moisture from just “sitting” in the bathroom. Hanging wet towels somewhere other than the bathroom is also a smart way to avoid too much moisture.

Clogged Pipe: To avoid clogging pipes, be careful about what goes into your drains. Here are some tips:

- Don't put grease down your drains. Throw all other food wastes into a garbage disposal or trash can.
- Limit hair clogs by throwing them in the garbage can.
- Do not flush diapers, sanitary products, Q-tips, cotton balls, dental floss or hair down your toilet. You may consider adding a filter to your bathtub drain.

Leaking Pipe: Be aware of sudden, unexplained increases in your water bill and damp or wet areas in your home. These could mean you have a leaking pipe. If you suspect a leak, turn off the supply of water to that pipe. For a major leak, call a plumber right away since leaking pipes can quickly damage your home. For a small leak, you may be able to stop it temporarily with a sleeve clamp, adjustable hose clamp, or epoxy putty. Then, as soon as you are able to do so, replace the leaking pipe or have a plumber replace it.

Pest Control: To avoid having a problem with bugs and other pests, keep your house clean, especially your kitchen. Don't leave food or dirty plates out and keep food containers in cupboards tightly sealed. Keep outside garbage cans tightly sealed as well.

If you think you have a serious pest problem such as rodents, roaches, or carpenter ants in your home, call a pest control professional right away.

LANDSCAPING

Your new yard has been lightly landscaped. You may decide to do more landscaping after you are settled. There are many advantages to a well-landscaped lawn. For starters, you and your family can enjoy it! Landscaping can also increase the value of your home and, with careful planning, make your house more energy efficient. In addition, you can help prevent soil erosion and protect your home's foundation.

First, learn all that you can about the types of plants, flowers and trees which are likely to do well in this climate. You may want to contact a local greenhouse to address any questions.

When deciding what you want in your yard, think ahead about what you want your yard to look like in ten years. Also, remember everything you plant will require maintenance and care. When planting trees, be sure they will not interfere with power lines when they grow. Keep plants and flowers at least three feet away from your home's foundation.

Caring for your lawn and trees:

Watering: Your lawn and any new trees will require frequent watering early on. It is best to water early in the morning. Continue watering regularly until the ground freezes.

Re-seeding: During the first fall after you move in, rake your lawn, reseed it, and fertilize it. You may also reseed brown spots.

Mowing: Ideally, your mower should be tuned up every year or two. A tune-up includes cleaning the motor, sharpening the blades and changing the spark plugs. Keeping the blades sharp will help improve the health and appearance of your lawn. Mow your lawn often enough so you don't need to remove too much in a single cutting. A good rule of thumb is to only remove one-third of the height of your lawn each time.

Fertilizing: Fertilizing your grass gives it added nutrients to help it grow and stay healthy. If you fertilize, you'll want to do the bulk of it in early spring—perhaps four or five times. Then repeat every two months or so during the growing season.

Raking: For your grass to stay healthy, it is important to rake leaves from your lawn each fall. Also, pick up fallen branches and other debris.

Specific Areas of your New House

Basement Ventilation

The need for ventilation changes with the configuration of the basement. Does it have living space? Is there an extra bathroom? How partitioned off is the area? These are all questions you need to ask yourself to maintain a nice living condition in your basement.

If your house was built with another bath in the lower level, you will want to make sure that your bath fan is left on during times of high moisture.

Summer time without the use of an air conditioner can add a lot of extra moisture to the lower level because moisture-laden air is heavier and tends to settle to the lowest level of the structure. A well-maintained dehumidifier will keep an unfinished basement dry and mold free during the summer. A finished basement might require more help depending on the number of people and /or pets you have in this area. Each legal bedroom will have an egress window. These windows may be opened to provide ventilation. Screens are provided and should be maintained to prevent the entry of pests.

Cleaning Tips

It is a good idea to periodically clean the wood products in your kitchen and apply a good quality polish to maintain its new appearance.

Laminate will scratch easily, so a cutting board is a must. Never place hot stove pans on top of laminated surfaces as this will either melt the surfaces or cause lifting.

Keep the floor clean and always use the manufacturer's recommended products for care.

To prolong the life of the carpet, it must be vacuumed frequently.

Central Air Conditioning: All habitat furnaces are compatible with central air units and can be installed at any time during the life of the furnace. Consult any qualified contractor for size recommendations and price. Make sure you get warranty papers from them.

Dehumidifier

In high moisture conditions in your basement, installing a high quality portable dehumidifier may be necessary. Leave the dehumidifier plugged in all year long. There is a basket that detaches from either the front or the rear of the unit. During the summer you will need to empty the basket on a daily basis. During the winter, you may not need to empty it as often because of the drier air conditions. Most units have a "FULL" light that will warn you to empty the basket. When this light is on, the unit will not run. There are kits available at any home store to attach a hose to the unit to make draining automatic.

Dishwasher

Dishwashers normally give years of service without any maintenance needs. It is a good idea to periodically remove the bottom rack and inspect the interior for small foreign debris that may have fallen to the bottom of the machine. This debris may block the water intake or get into the pump.

Problem: I haven't used my dishwasher for months. Today I decided to do a load and now the dishwasher leaks!

Solution: This is not uncommon. If you do not intend to use your dishwasher on a regular basis, you are better off not installing one at all. Dishwashers have plastic and rubber parts that will lose their seal if not used on a regular basis. Many times, if a machine has not been used in some time, the seals will re-seal after a couple of uses. If for some reason the machine has not been used for a long time, it may require professional attention to repair it correctly.

Electrical Panel

The electrical panel will normally be located in an unfinished or utility area of your home. All the high voltage flows through this panel and is distributed to the various devices and appliances in your home. **Only qualified personnel should remove the screws that hold the cover on.** There is a door that you may open to access the breakers. Normally, all breakers will be in the "ON" position, but you can shut off any breaker by just flipping it to the "OFF" position. In addition to the regular breakers, your house has been equipped with CGFI breakers that have been installed for your personal safety. A CGFI breaker will pop any time it senses a connection to an earth ground. This may be as simple as turning on a light switch with wet hands. There is a button on the outlet itself that you will need to push to reset this type of breaker.

On the other hand, an Arc fault breaker has the ability to sense arcing that may be happening in say an electric blanket, or an electrical cord. These breakers are

usually wired into bedrooms and if they pop you should investigate why this is happening. Unplug each item that is plugged in one at a time, until the breaker does not pop again. This unsafe item either needs to be repaired or discarded.

All the other breakers are the normal types that have the ability to sense a load that is too great for the wiring or a direct short. If these pop, take the time to identify what has created this problem and either isolate the defective unit or reduce the power demands of that circuit. If one of these breakers should trip, turning the breaker completely off and then turning it back on again can reset it. If this breaker trips immediately again, you have not isolated the problem and more research is needed. If you cannot get the breaker to reset, call a qualified electrician.

On most houses, the doorbell transformer will probably be mounted on the side of the electrical panel. If your doorbell stops working, check the doorbell button and wiring. Then check the transformer. There is a good chance this is the part that may need replacement.

Furnace

Your home mechanical systems are of the highest quality and should give years of trouble-free service with minimum maintenance. Let's start by taking a look at your furnace. All Habitat homes are supplied with a quality new 90% or higher furnace. This furnace will probably last for 20 years or longer. Because this is a high-efficiency furnace, it creates water vapor during the combustion process that is drained through a hose to the floor drain. This water is acidic in nature (unlike a dehumidifier) and is not suitable for ingestion or use on plants. Make sure that the hose remains unblocked and that it empties directly into the floor drain. The furnace has a switch that has been wired into the electrical supply to the furnace itself. This switch is used to disconnect the power from the unit during service work, and normally never needs to be touched. This same switch is an easy target for young children and should be the first thing you check if the unit fails to start.

Problem: I just went to turn on my furnace for the first time this season and it doesn't do anything.

Possible answer: The maintenance switch on the side of your furnace may have been turned to the "OFF" position during the course of the summer. Turn it "ON."

The unit has a replaceable fiberglass filter that should be checked once a month and replaced as needed to ensure good air quality and efficient operation of the furnace. These filters have a cardboard frame and are inexpensive. It is wise to schedule a professional appointment to have a qualified technician check your furnace for problems at least every two to five years. The technician will check for hidden problems such as cracks in the heat exchanger, proper cycling of the motor, etc.

Gas, Water, & Electrical Hook-ups

ALL UTILITIES ARE TRANSFERRED TO YOUR NAME BEFORE CLOSING ON THE HOME.

IF A GAS ODOR IS PRESENT, LEAVE THE BUILDING AND CALL 911 ON YOUR CELL PHONE OR FROM A NEIGHBOR'S.

Hot Water Heater

On the water heater unit, there is a round dial at the bottom of the unit. If you look closely, this dial builds a bar from warm to hot, with an arrow part way that indicates a normal setting. Normal is about 115 degrees.

CAUTION: A HOUSEHOLD WITH EITHER YOUNG CHILDREN OR HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS SHOULD NEVER HAVE THE WATER HEATER SET ABOVE THE NORMAL SETTING OR SEVERE BURNING MAY OCCUR.

It is suggested that a gallon of water be drained from the hot water heater about every 3 months.

The only other user-adjustable feature on a water heater is an "ON/OFF" switch located at the top of the unit by the exhaust motor. This is for maintenance and just always be left "ON" by the consumer.

Problem: When I turn on the hot water, it takes a long time before I get really hot water.

Cause: There are 2 situations that you should be aware of when dealing with water heaters. If you: 1. Notice water seeping from the base of the unit or 2. Notice water coming out of the pressure release valve, (a valve near the top of the unit that attaches to a pipe that runs down the side of the unit and discharges near the floor), you should immediately shut off the gas (the valve on the black pipe-turn right) or turn off the electrical breaker. Also turn off the water to the

unit (valve located on the copper inlet pipe of unit). Call a qualified service technician.

Problem: My water is not very hot OR my water is too hot.

Solution: Go to your water heater and check where the dial at the bottom of the water heater is set. Place the dial in line with the arrow between warm and hot.

Light Fixtures & Lamps

The light fixtures in your home are quality UL-listed devices that will last for many years. The most important thing to remember about these fixtures is to always replace any bulb with a bulb of equal or less wattage to ensure that the fixture is operating within its design limits. Overhead bedroom lights are wired to accept a fan-light combination. You may find two switches in your bedroom-one is for the light and the other will operate the fan if installed. Consult a qualified Electrician if you have questions. All bedrooms utilize a fan-rated electrical box.

Outlets

Normally all outlets in the home will be hot. On some homes, you may have an outlet called a CGFI outlet. These special outlets are in areas such as the kitchen, baths, and outside the house. These devices can sense a path to ground that may come from wet hands or very high humidity. If this device does sense a ground fault, it will interrupt the connection to prevent injury. The device has two buttons on the front.

One reads "TEST" and the other reads "RESET." If the power should be interrupted, it can be re-established by pushing the "RESET" button. These outlets should be tested on a regular basis by just pushing the "TEST" button. The "RESET" button will pop out. Push the "RESET" button back in and the outlet should be energized.

NOTE: A CGFI outlet can protect as many as six regular outlets down stream from the device, so if a regular outlet stops working and all your circuit breakers are ok, be sure to check all your CGFI breakers to be sure none need to be reset. If in the case that a CGFI breaker will not reset when tested, it must be replaced.

IN THE EVENT THAT A CGFI OUTLET MUST BE REPLACED, DO NOT REPLACE WITH A COMMON DUPLEX OUTLET.

CGFI safety devices are installed to provide an adequate measure of safety against electrocution. If your home does not have visible CGFI, that means you have CGFI breakers in the Electrical Panel. These breakers test the same way as the devices and should be tested on a regular basis.

Outside Water Faucets

Your house is equipped with at least one outside water faucet. Some faucets that we have installed on our homes are called barrel faucets. This means that the actual shut-off mechanism is in a barrel that is 12 to 18 inches inside your home to help prevent freezing. In addition, somewhere upstream from this shutoff will be a shut-off valve that you should close before winter.

Some house may have a non-barrel outside faucet. With this type, one must be sure to shut off a valve inside the house and drain the faucet by leaving the outside non-barrel faucet open over the winter. If this is not done, the pipe may burst.

Never leave a garden hose hooked up to your water faucet during the winter. If the water was not completely shut off, system freezing will occur thus defeating the barrel mechanism.

Damage to frozen pipes can be very costly. The problem with a frozen system is that you may not detect it when it is cold outside, but when you least expect it, it warms up outside and your basement can flood. This can cause damage to your stored items and busted pipes may or may not be covered under your homeowner's insurance policy.

Phone & Cable Hookups

These are the responsibility of the homeowner.

Phone jacks are installed in the kitchen, and the cable jacks are in the living room and bedroom.

Ranges (Stoves)

As of this writing, all Habitat houses are supplied with a new Whirlpool (gas or electric) range (stove). It is important for both sanitary and safety reasons to keep the appliance clean. A dirty stove is a fire hazard! If you should happen to have a small fire in an oven, keep the door shut, turn off the oven and let it burn out.

DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR TO TRY TO PUT THE FIRE OUT!

This will only give the fire a fresh air source to flare up and personal injury may result. Pan fires on top of the stove can normally be put out with a lid that fits securely to the pan. The idea is to remove the air source, and the fire will go out.

NEVER USE WATER TO PUT OUT A STOVE TOP OR OVEN FIRE! WATER AND OIL DO NOT MIX. WATER WILL CAUSE A REACTION THAT WILL MAKE THE FIRE JUMP TO ADJOINING CUMBUSTIBLE SURFACES.

Always keep lids in a convenient, easy-to-reach area in case of fire flare-ups. Baking soda will work well to put out small grease fires and is fairly easy to clean up. A five-pound ABC dry type fire extinguisher is a good addition to any kitchen. A good rule of thumb: If at any time you think that a fire is getting out of control-IT ALREADY IS! Call 911 from either a neighbor's house or a cell phone.

Another device in the kitchen that should be checked and cleaned on a regular basis is the range exhaust hood. If you look on the underside of the unit you will see a small grease filter that is easy to remove and service. Read your manual for instructions for cleaning.

Refrigerator

Refrigerators normally have a removable grill on the bottom of the appliance. If you remove this grill there should be a catch pan for spilled liquid materials from the inside of the unit. If you notice odors in your kitchen, this is a good area to investigate. The grills are easy to remove and can be cleaned in the kitchen sink. Read the owners manual for your unit because there may be additional cleaning recommendations for the coils and related parts that can be accessed through this open panel.

It cannot be stated enough the importance of taking the time to read and understand all the owner manuals that come with your home. This will not only ensure safety, but will allow you to utilize all the features of the equipment.

Thermostats

There are basically two types of thermostats used on Habitat homes. The first is a non-programmable type. It has a scale on top that you set to the desired temperature and a scale on the bottom that show the current temperature. The other type, the programmable thermostat, lets you program the temperature to be different for different times of the day. If you are normally gone during the day, it will allow the house to cool down during the time you are gone and then

automatically heat back up just before you come home. Each day can be different to match your daily schedule.

Washer and Dryer

WASHER: No matter whether your washer and dryer came with your house or you supplied your own, there are a few things you should know and a few things to keep an eye out for on your appliances. Your washer should be leveled when you install it. Use a proper length level, either an 18-inch level or torpedo level, and level it from side to side and from front to rear. Make sure you have help in this process because washers are heavy. On most washers the front two feet can be individually screwed either in or out to get the front of your machine level. Normally there will be a back-up nut that must be tightened up against the machine to keep the adjuster from moving once it is set. Most washers have self-leveling rear adjusters. To set the level on these, stand in front of the washer and lift the back off the ground by pulling the top towards you. Lift at least four inches off the ground. Slowly let the washer back down and check for levelness and make sure the washer does not wobble. You may have to repeat this process more than once.

DRYER: The main thing to watch for on your dryer is the condition of its vent. Depending on the design of your house, the vent may be anywhere from 3 feet to 25 feet in length. The shorter the length, the more efficient it is. Vents either need to be cleaned on a regular basis or they need to be replaced. If you have a basement hose with 4" steel or aluminum solid piping, it is not too difficult to disassemble the vent and clean each part and then re-assemble it back to its original configuration. If you have aluminum flex pipe, it is just as easy to take it down, go to your home store, and buy a new piece to replace it. Plastic hose is not recommended. If your home has a pipe that is built into a wall and exits to a gable end or roof, you may want to consider calling a professional heating and cooling contractor to clean this for you.

Something to Think About:

1. What steps can I take to ensure a dry basement? There is nothing you can do to insure a dry basement. Basements by nature tend to be wet; remember they are in the ground. But if you maintain the systems of your home, you should be able to keep your basement a very livable space,

Start at the top of your house. The eave troughs that run long the sides of your house carry water from the roof to the downspouts that carry water far enough

away from the foundation so that it does not seep down along the walls to your footings. It is very important to check and clean these eave troughs and downspouts each fall after the leaves have fallen. Water needs to be carried at least four feet away from the house.

Maintain the grade. The grade or slope of your landscaping should be maintained with a downhill slope away from your house. A very large and deep hole was made to accept your foundation and basement walls. When the foundation was backfilled, the machine operator did every thing in his power to compact the soil back to its original condition. There will be settling of dirt around your foundation for years to come. You as the homeowner will have to pay attention to this and add dirt as needed to maintain the proper grade. Failure to maintain the proper grade will allow water to follow the walls of your foundation, and, in a worse care scenario, will flood the basement because the sump pump will either not be able to keep up or may possibly burn out from overuse.

During the winter, never bank snow up against your house- freeze and thaw cycles can add to your water problem.

2. What should I consider if I want to finish off my basement? Most people like to finish off their basements to fully utilize all the space in their home. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER SAFETY! It is strongly recommended that you never finish off a room to be a bedroom in a basement that does not have an egress window. That is why we stamp plans without egress windows "NOT INTENDED OR DESIGNED TO BE USED AS A BEDROOM." Be sure to acquire a building permit and hire professionals for electrical, heating, and plumbing needs.

3. Do I need a fire extinguisher? Fire extinguishers are a good investment. A ten-pound unit for the basement in the area that all your appliances are located, and a five-pound unit in the kitchen can make a big difference in an emergency. You only want to fight very small fires. The main purpose of a fire extinguisher is to aid in your exit from a structure. Any time there is a fire, even if you put it out, you should still call 911 so that a trained fire fighter can ensure the fire has been put out completely and there is no chance for danger, or re-igniting. Be sure you know your escape routes.

4. What about leaks under the sink? A periodic check underneath the sinks is a good idea to catch possible leaks before extensive damage occurs. Leaks on recently built homes are rare, but they can occur.

5. If your house is equipped with a sewer and grinder pump. Check the sewer grinder pump per the manufacturers manual.

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE TIPS

Spring

- Test your carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Make sure the alarms will sound. Replace old batteries if needed.
- Reduce moisture build-up and condensation. Moist, warm-air can cause mold to grow on walls! Cover pots with lids while you are cooking and always run the range-hood fan. Use the bathroom fan when showering and leave it on for a half-hour after you are done to help take moisture out of the house.
- Change air exchanger to “summer” setting
- Check your outside faucets for leaks. Make sure than any protective covers on your outdoor fixtures are intact.
- Check windows and screens for damage that may have happened during the winter months.
- Check walls and trim for loose and peeling paint, cracks, loose siding and rotting wood.
- Clean leaves and debris out of your window wells and gutters.
- Check your roof for damaged shingles. After winter it’s a good idea to check for wear and tear. You can do this by carefully climbing on your roof with a ladder or examining it through binoculars.
- Squirrels and birds can do a lot of damage to your home if they get into your attic and build nests. Check the exterior walls and roof of your house for decay or holes where animals may have entered.
- Examine your steps, sidewalks and railings. Make repairs if necessary. The winter thaw can leave cement and boards loose.
- Check the condition of glazing compound, caulking and exterior paint. Replace or paint as needed.
- Take out glass and put in screen in storm doors.
- Seed and feed the lawn if it wasn’t done in the fall. We suggest the grass be mowed to a height of around 2” to 3”.
- If you have a separate air conditioning system, clean and change filters as the manufacturer recommends.

- Test your smoke and CO2 alarms for proper operation. Be sure to clean the units with a vacuum or swab, clean the filter (if any), and replace batteries and light bulbs when necessary.
- Clean weep holes on all windows and door sliders. Dry lubricate all window tracks to aid in ease of operation.

Summer

- Test Smoke Detectors
- Check storm doors, screens, and windows for smooth operation, fit and damage. Repair as needed.
- Remove warm, moist air; use fans and windows. Use exhaust fan on stove while cooking and bathroom fan or open window during shower.
- Wipe up condensation in bathroom as often as needed.
- Clean out gutters on house (if applicable).
- Wash windows and vinyl siding and put screens on windows.
- Each summer month you must flush floor drains with a pail of water to prevent sewer gas from backing up.
- Trim tree branches that could damage roof or house. Call a professional if needed.
- Keep your lawn beautiful! Cut grass at least once a week.
- If watering lawn is needed, do it early in the morning or late in the evening to prevent evaporation.
- Pick up litter, junk and other waste from your yard – *help keep your neighborhood beautiful!*

Fall

- Check all faucets, valves and water pipes for leaks or loose fittings.
- Test all smoke detectors and the carbon monoxide detectors. Replace batteries as needed.
- Lower the temperature on the water heater to 125 degrees. If your water heater does not have a degree marker, check the temperature by holding a cooking thermometer under the hot water at the laundry tub faucet.
- Drain a pail of water from your water heater to remove sediment build up (open drain valve at bottom of tank into a bucket or pail).
- In older houses with radiators, check your hot-water system for leaks around the boiler or pipe fittings.
- Check your wall thermostat for excessive dust.
- Make sure vents, registers or radiators are not blocked by drapes, furniture or other obstructions.
- Change Air Exchange filter to “winter” setting

- Rake leaves!
- Clean gutters and downspouts after the leaves have fallen (if applicable).
- Check eaves for squirrel holes, bird nests or insect nests.
- Prune any tree branches growing near your roof.
- Check caulking around exterior pipes, vents, windows and doorframes.
Weather stripping on doors and windows should fit tightly.
- Shut off and drain waterline to the exterior faucet if you do not have a freeze-proof exterior water faucet. This helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- Check the condition of glazing compound, caulking and exterior paint. Replace or paint as needed.
- Take out screen and put in glass in storm doors.
- Seed and feed the lawn; do appropriate pruning of perennials; rake and compost leaves; mulch perennials that need winter protection.
- Keep driveways, walks, and steps free of ice and snow to avoid damage to them and to prevent hazardous walking and driving conditions.
- Have your heating system cleaned and repaired if necessary (when not in use). If your unit has an air filter, replace it at least every three months during heating season. Check to see if heat registers are clean.
- Check cords and plugs of all electrical appliances for wear. If necessary, have them repaired or replaced.
- Test your smoke alarm and CO2 alarm for proper operation. Be sure to clean the units with a vacuum or swab, clean the filter (if any), and replace batteries and light bulbs when necessary
- Inspect all doors and windows for proper operation and a tight fit and that the locks are working properly. Clean all window tracks, clean and adjust the door thresholds, and check the weather stripping on windows and doors. Preventing unwanted outside air from leaking into your home will reduce your energy bills.
- Make periodic checks of storage areas, backs of closets, basement corners, etc., to be sure no oily rags, unvented gas cans, painting supplies, or flammable cleaning materials have been forgotten. These items could be a fire hazard and should be discarded. Many local fire departments will provide free home safety inspections.
- Check stairs, steps, and ladders for broken or hazardous areas that could cause an accident. Check handrails and railings for sturdiness and reliability.
- Test all the lights located in infrequently used spaces to be sure they work when they are needed.
- Check all connections to the electrical system to correct any possible hazards. Replace frayed electrical cords and do not overload extension cords.
- Check to see if faucets and sinks are leak free

- Check the fire extinguisher(s).
- Check sump and grinder pumps.

Preparing for Winter Exterior of the House

- Drain the garden hoses before the temperatures reach freezing.
- If applicable, clean gutters and ensure they are properly attached.
- Trim trees and remove the dead branches.
- If you have a basement, check to see that windows are all secured tightly.
- Examine caulking for deterioration around doors, windows, and joints between wood and masonry.
- Replace worn weather-stripping around exterior doors.

SPECIFIC TO YOUR HOUSE

Plumber

Name _____

Company _____

Phone _____

Electrician

Name _____

Company _____

Phone _____

Your utility Companies are:

Electric _____

Gas _____

Water _____

Garbage _____

TV/Phone/Internet _____