



CITY AUTHORIZES SERVICE LINE WARRANTY PROGRAM

By Keri Bugenhagen - News Editor

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CRESCO – The City of Cresco has recently introduced an optional warranty program that will help reduce the homeowner’s cost burden for service line repairs. Last week, Cresco residents received an official letter from the City explaining the newly authorized Water Line Warranty for Cresco homeowners, made available through Service Line Warranties of America (SLWA). Water line repairs are often unexpected as well as costly, and with the warranty, such repairs are covered up to \$4,000 per incident, plus an additional \$500 allowance for public sidewalk cutting, if needed.

City Clerk Michelle Girolamo encourages homeowners to consider their personal financial situation in order to determine whether there is enough in savings to cover unforeseen problems, or if they would be more comfortable paying for the insurance that would cover such incidents. “View it like the service guard that Black Hills Energy offers or like an extended warranty that you can purchase for vehicles, appliance or electronics,” she stated. “It is an individual decision.”

How did the program get started in Cresco? When Public Works Director Rod Freidhof came across an article pertaining to the program in CityScape magazine, it not only caught his eye, but subsequently, the eye of several City Council members as well. “Many residents become frustrated when they are told that the city is not responsible for a service line repair,” states the article. “The homeowner must contract with a plumber and pay the repair costs if the damage occurs between the city’s main pipe and the water meter or the connection to the home.”

The article continues, “Cities that participate in the warranty program can enhance the city’s image by reducing the homeowner’s cost and making reputable plumbers readily available.”

In addition, Girolamo says the City carefully researched the SLWA program, concurring with the Iowa League of Cities in deeming it beneficial for local homeowners. “As the City, we are not trying to force this on anyone that is not interested in it, but rather giving them the option to sign up if they feel that it is a program for their situation,” she said, adding that there is no cost for the program and should a participating homeowner need service line repairs, a plumber will be dispatched to the location within 24 hours.

Also, if enrolled by June 28, 2011, SLWA will offer a discounted price of \$4.25 per month, which represents a savings of over 10 percent on the standard monthly price. And if homeowners elect to pay annually, the cost will be further discounted to \$44, which means a total savings of more than 20 percent.

Most of the water lines in Cresco are copper as per City Code, because copper lines tend to come with fewer problems than iron lines have. Of course, prior to a water line break it can be difficult to estimate the cost burden for homeowners. “The cost for repairs really depends how long the service line is,” said Girolamo.

Also, the price of copper tends to fluctuate frequently and the conditions for digging vary vastly throughout the months of the year, making a cost estimation even more difficult to make.

Still, Girolamo says local plumbers have agreed that coverage of up to \$4,000 should be more than sufficient in most cases.

A similar program will soon be offered with sewer lines. “Sewer is probably going to be the more prevalent program that people will be interested in,” stated Mayor Mark Bohle.

In fact, Girolamo agrees, stating that plumbers are seeing some problems with the older sewer lines, which can be attributed to orangeburg lines, clay lines, cast iron lines as well as thin PVC pipes. Again, \$4,000 coverage will likely be more than sufficient in such cases, and the cost will vary depending on the length of the service line.

In fall 2011, Cresco homeowners can expect to see a similar mailing pertaining to the sewer line program. “Again, homeowners will need to decide whether they would like to participate in the program or not,” explained Mayor Bohle. “We offer this as an option; we’re not promoting this, we’re simply authorizing it.”

The mayor says that residents should find out how old their water and sewer lines are, as well as what type of material the lines are made of. “If you have an older home, I’d probably be more concerned about potential problems,” he said, adding, “It’s just like insurance, if you can’t sleep at night because you’re worried about your water line, then you might want to buy this protection, or if you don’t have much in savings, this is just \$44 per year.”

As similarly stated by both Freidhof and Girolamo, Mayor Bohle said, “Consider your own situation, we’re simply offering something that wasn’t available before.”

Mayor Bohle did say that last week’s letters were mistakenly sent by the warranty company outside of city limits. “We’ll get that corrected for the next time around,” he said.

The Public Works Director added, “If you live outside city limits, just throw the letter away because it doesn’t pertain to you.”

Participating area plumbers include: Gosch’s Inc. Plumbing & Heating; Kubik Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning; and Cresco Heating & Ventilating Co.

To enroll in the water line program, or to learn more about the program, call 1-855-520-3181 to speak with SLWA directly, or visit www.utilitylineprotection.com.