

Tips on caring for your new home...

We hope that you enjoy your new home. By maintaining it properly, you will enjoy it more and contribute to the total quality and beauty of your neighborhood.

On the following pages, you will find some Homeowner Maintenance Tips, which should help you maintain your new home.

Also please familiarize yourself with our Warranty Service Procedures, which are found in this section.

Items Covered In This Section

- Air Conditioning
- Heating System
- Plumbing
- Gas Shut Offs
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- Building Material Expansion and Contraction
- Painting and Staining
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Air Conditioning

Air conditioning can add much to the comfort of your home but if used improperly, can result in wasted energy and improper cooling. To help you maximize your air conditioning system, we offer the following suggestions:

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

- B: If you come home at 5:30 p.m. on a day when the temperature has reached 90 degrees, and set your thermostat to 75 degrees, the air conditioning unit will begin cooling, but will take a long time to reach the desired temperature. At 5:30 p.m. the air conditioning unit will start cooling the air, but the walls, carpet and furniture release heat and nullify this cooling. It may be hours before the air conditioning unit has cooled the walls, carpet and furniture.

- C: If no one is home during the day, you should set the air conditioner to a moderate temperature before leaving, allowing the unit to maintain the cooler temperature through the day. Then lower the setting slightly further when you arrive home. Setting the thermostat at 60 degrees will NOT cool the home any faster and can result in the unit “freezing up” and not performing at all, which can damage the unit.

- D: Be sure to adjust the cooling vents to maximize airflow to occupied parts of the home.

If your air conditioner does not operate properly even after you have followed the above guidelines and the manufacturer’s warranty booklet, call the Builder listed on the Warranty Service page.

HEATING SYSTEM

- A: Good maintenance of the furnace can save energy dollars as well as prolong the life of your furnace. Carefully read the manufacturer's Warranty Booklet, and remember to change the filter monthly during the heating season.
- B: If you find yourself with no heat, the following may identify the cause; also review the manufacturer's Warranty Booklet for help. These are normal homeowner maintenance items. If your heating contractor makes a service call to turn on a switch, replace a fuse or reset a breaker, you will be obligated to pay a service charge.
- 1: Thermostat temperature setting and switches
 - 2: The **ON/OFF** switch in the furnace room
 - 3: The fuse, if your furnace has one
 - 4: **ON/OFF** switch on furnace-check the manufacturer's booklet for location
 - 5: Breaker on the electrical panel
 - 6: Safety switch for the fan cover

If none of these are the problem, call the Warranty Service Department, but remember, only problems caused by an installation error would be warranted. The furnace is warranted by the manufacturer:

GAS SHUT OFFS

There is a shut off 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 and call the gas company immediately for Emergency service.

PLUMBING

To insure against plumbing problems, observe the following guidelines:

- A: 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 10-15 second after shutting off the disposal.
- B: If you decide to finish the basement, care should be taken in doing so to insure that the plumbing lines are not isolated from the heating source.
- C: Provided your home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze. Heat should be set at 65 degrees at least when you're away during winter months. If temperatures are below normal, you should open cupboards to allow heat to the pipes and let faucets drip to keep pipes from freezing.
- D: Outside faucets must be shut off during freezing weather and the hose removed.
- E: In the event of a leak or broken pipe, shut off water to that fixture as soon as possible and call a plumber. Each sink and commode has a shut off for its water supply or use the main water shut off if necessary.
- F: Lines installed for sprinkler systems are the responsibility of the Homeowner.
- G: If your water supply stops completely, first check the water shut off at the front of the house or garage. Next, check the water meter shut off to confirm the service has not been shut down in your area. If this is not the problem, please call our Warranty Service Department.

PLEASE NOTE: Having to shut off the water to an isolated item in the home (such as a toilet) is not an emergency. If it is a warrantable problem, submit it to our Warranty Service Department in accordance with normal procedures.

SEWER STOPPAGE

All of your sewer and drain lines should operate freely and should have been inspected by the local building department. If a sewer or drain lines 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 contact us 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 manufacturer's guidelines regarding the use of garbage disposals and not to 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.

If a service call is required and it is determined that the problem is not warranted, you will be responsible for the plumber's charges.

ELECTRICAL

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:

- A: Check the main breaker in the master control panel discussed above.
- B: 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, first check to see if it is controlled by a wall switch. Also check to be sure that the light bulb or appliance being used is working.

Your home’s electrical system also contains Ground Fault Interrupter Circuits, commonly referred to as **GFI** receptacles. Installation of these **GFI** receptacles is 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.

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 to it is defective.

FLOOR COVERING

The three most common types of flooring are: hardwood, ceramic tile and vinyl.

A: HARDWOOD FLOOR;

Wood floor will respond noticeable to changes in humidity; a humidifier will help, but will not completely eliminate this reaction. Wood floors will exhibit the following traits:

When new, small splinters of wood will appear; dimples or scratches can be caused by moving furniture, dropping heavy or sharp objects, etc. Some shrinkage or warping can be expected, especially around heat vents or any heat-producing appliances. Appliances will occur if the floor becomes repeatedly wet or is thoroughly soaked even on time. A dulling of the finish in heavy traffic areas is likely; a white, filmy appearance is caused by moisture.

Daily care of hardwood floors and preventive maintenance is the primary goal. For Example, never wet mop a hardwood floor. Excessive water causes wood to expand, possible damaging the floor.

Waxing is not necessary or recommended. We recommend that in a period of six months to one year, you have an extra cost of polyurethane applied to your hardwood floor. This should be done by a qualified contractor. The exact timing will depend on your particular lifestyle.

B: CERAMIC TILE:

This is one of the easiest of floor covering to care for. Simply vacuum or wet mop if needed, but do not add detergent to the water. If the floor needs cleaning, use warm water and dishwasher crystals, and rinse thoroughly.

It is normal for a slight separation to occur where tile grout meets another material, such as along the edge of a bathtub. Tub and tile caulk can be used to seal this separation.

C: VINYL:

High heels should no be worn while walking on vinyl floors as this will cause damage. Clean according to manufacturer's recommendations, or use a vinegar and water solution.

Scratches, cuts and the like in vinyl after your pre-closing walk through are your responsibility.

BUILDING MATERIAL EXPANSION & CONTRACTION

Most building materials 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 small cracks in the drywall and paint and small separations between materials. This is very normal in a new home, even in the highest quality of construction. Shrinkage of the wood and sheetrock items in your home is inevitable, and this will be most noticeable during the first year following completion of the construction. However, generally all that is needed is a small cosmetic repair, sometimes involving only minor caulking. Keep in mind though, even properly installed caulk will eventually require replacement by the homeowner.

PAINTING AND STAINING

Follow these guidelines for painting and staining in your home:

- A: Paint touch-up after your pre-closing walkthrough is the homeowner's responsibility.
- B: Do not wash interior walls.
- C: Check the surface of your home's exterior annually. If you can repair paint or stain before there is much wearing away of the original finish, you will save the cost of extensive preparation.
- D: Separation of wood trim from the adjacent material is a normal result of shrinkage, which can require caulking and touch-up painting as a repair; this is a Homeowner maintenance responsibility.

DOOR LOCKS

Lubricate door locks with graphite or other waterproof lubricant. Avoid oil, as it will gum up. Tighten locks as needed.

CABINETS

Cabinets should be cleaned with products such as Liquid Gold and Old English Furniture Polish. White cabinets can be cleaned by using a mild soap and water solution.

COUNTER TOPS

Always use a cutting board when cutting, chopping, etc. protect the counter from hot pans and avoid abrasive cleaners that will damage the luster of the surface.

Backsplashes and counter tops will need to be caulked from time to time. This is the homeowner's responsibility.

CONCRETE

Our warranty does not cover most concrete. Concrete is not replaced because of cracking, unless extensive cracking occurs 1/8 inch or more.

By maintaining good drainage away from your home, you are protecting both your home's foundation and the basement floor slab. Sweep your garage out-don't hose it out.

ROOF

After severe storms, the homeowner should make a visual inspection of the roof for damage; notify your homeowner's insurance if there is storm damage noted.

Maintain the gutters and downspouts so that they are free of debris and will drain quickly.

GARAGE OVERHEAD DOOR

On a yearly basis, a light gauge oil should be applied to track, roller, hinges, pulleys and springs. Also, check to see if nuts and bolts are tight.

DRAINAGE AND LANDSCAPING

Proper drainage depends on proper grading to ensure efficient drainage of water away from the foundation of your home.

- A: The grading has been done to facilitate water run-off. Do not fill in or change drainage as you may cause foundation problems to your home.

- B: You are responsible for maintaining grades and swales in order to keep water away from your foundation. You are also responsible for landscaping your yard in order to avoid soil erosion.

CAULKING

It is the responsibility of the homeowner to properly maintain the caulking throughout the home. This is especially critical in the bathrooms. Tile grout that is cracking should be immediately repaired with a good tub and tile caulk. Two types of caulk are:

- A: Silicone Caulk-Caulking that contains silicone will not accept paint, but works best where water is present.

- B: Latex Caulk-Latex caulking is appropriate for an area that requires painting.