

# *Bonded Builders Warranty Group*

## **Homeowner's Maintenance Manual**

PROTECTING  
THE  
AMERICAN  
DREAM



# Homeowner's Maintenance Manual



## Bonded Builders Warranty Group

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**BONDED BUILDERS**



**WARRANTY GROUP**

## Dear New Homeowner,

The Bonded Builders Homeowner's Maintenance Manual is written in a manner that we hope will help you understand how your new home functions. It is a resource manual, which is intended for informational purposes only.

If you follow these few simple maintenance procedures, in a timely manner as described in this manual, your home will give you many years of pleasure and comfort.

The manual explains in simple and easily understood language your normal Homeowner's Maintenance responsibilities, which should always be conducted in a prudent, cautious and safe manner.

If you feel that certain types of maintenance or repairs are beyond your particular capabilities, we suggest and urge you to call a professional, licensed contractor to perform the needed work.

We have attempted to cover all of your home's maintenance areas with as much pertinent information and their primary needs as possible. Since our manual is widely distributed in many states, some information may not pertain or apply to your geographic location. It is impossible to address every scenario or method of maintenance. If we have omitted anything and you are unsure of how to proceed, we suggest that you refer to the manufacturer's written instructions, or contact a local professional contractor.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING ANY AND ALL MANUFACTURED ITEMS**

*(eg: appliances, garage doors, windows and doors, toilets, sinks, tubs, faucets, etc.)*

The suggestions and recommendations found in this manual are not intended to replace or substitute any of the manufacturer's recommendations. If you should notice a conflict between our suggestions and those recommendations provided by the manufacturer, the manufacturer's directions and guidelines always supercede our suggestions.



*NOTE: THIS MAINTENANCE MANUAL ADDRESSES VARIOUS TYPES OF CONSTRUCTION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THEREFORE, SOME OF THE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS DESCRIBED IN THIS MAINTENANCE MANUAL MAY NOT BE APPLICABLE TO YOUR HOME.*

# Welcome To Your New Home!

In order to acquaint you with the maintenance requirements and warranty information about your new home, we are providing you with this Homeowner's Maintenance Manual which consists of four chapters:

1. Homeowner's Maintenance Checklists
2. General Information & Safety Tips
3. Homeowner's Maintenance Information
4. Glossary of Construction Terms

This book will provide useful information which will assist you in the maintenance and service requirements of your new home.

**The Homeowner's Maintenance Checklists** provide several lists of important preventative maintenance procedures required at periodic intervals. By adhering to these checklists, you can discover and correct minor maintenance problems before they become a major expense.

**The General Information & Safety Tips** section contains valuable information concerning public utilities coming into your home as well as a few safety tips which you should observe when doing routine maintenance.

**The Homeowner's Maintenance Information** section gives you an explanation of the basic components of your home. This section will note the normal repairs that may be required and gives you helpful hints on how to care for your home.

## **The Glossary of Construction**

Terms defines for the layman descriptions and terms used in the construction industry. A few minutes spent in reviewing this section can result in you having a more comprehensive knowledge of how your home is constructed and can be of great benefit when dealing with construction trades people.

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# Chapter One

## Homeowner's Maintenance Checklists



# The Homeowner's Maintenance Checklist

Welcome home! Even new homes have maintenance requirements and warranty details you should know about. This Homeowner's Maintenance Manual will acquaint you with an easy-to-follow breakdown of your responsibilities:

## **1. Homeowner's Maintenance Checklists    2. General Information and Safety Tips 3. Homeowner's Maintenance Information    4. Glossary of Construction Terms**

This book will provide useful information which will assist you in the maintenance and service requirements of your new home.

The Homeowner's Maintenance Checklists provide important preventive maintenance procedures required at periodic intervals. By adhering to these checklists, you can discover and correct minor maintenance problems before they become a major expense.

The General Information and Safety Tips section contains valuable information concerning public utilities coming into your home as well as a few safety tips which you should observe when doing routine maintenance.

The Homeowner's Maintenance Information section gives you an explanation of the basic components of your home. This section will note the normal repairs that may be required and gives you helpful hints on how to care for your home.

The Glossary of Construction Terms defines for the layman descriptions and terms used in the construction industry. A few minutes spent in reviewing this section can give you a better understanding of how your home was constructed. It can be of great benefit when dealing with construction tradespeople.

Your new home was designed to meet or exceed the requirements of the local building code as it read on the date your builder applied for the building permit. Your home was built to last for generations, but it has numerous components and systems that require periodic maintenance. Taking time to do preventive maintenance will make your home safer and save you money by keeping your home in working order. Most home maintenance projects will require only a few simple tools. Here are a few tools that you may find useful for normal home maintenance chores:

Adjustable wrench	Pliers	Utility knife
Flat-blade screwdriver	Flashlight/ batteries	Phillips head screwdriver
Claw-hammer	Electric drill & drill bits	Shop-grade vacuum cleaner
Caulk gun & caulk	6' step ladder	Extension ladder
Work gloves	Electrical extension cord	Shovel
Toilet plunger	Tape measure	Assorted nails, screws, nuts, bolts and sandpaper

By implementing the following preventive maintenance suggestions, you can help keep your home functioning properly with minimal problems.

To help you pinpoint when specific maintenance items should be performed, this checklist is divided into four time periods:

# The Homeowner's Maintenance Checklist

## After Move-In • Every Month • Every Six Months • Annually

Additionally, you may be provided with manufacturer manuals and operating instructions for various appliances and systems in your home. The suggested maintenance procedures in these manuals should be closely adhered to.

## After Move-in Checklist

### BATHROOMS AND MAIN FLOORS

- Apply grout sealer to ceramic tile grout if you wish to give the grout additional protection against discoloration from spills and stains.

### ELECTRIC

- Locate the main circuit breaker in the electric panel box and show family members how to turn it off in case of an emergency.

### FIRE EXTINGUISHER

- Purchase a general purpose fire extinguisher for each floor of the home plus one small kitchen extinguisher in case of grease fires. Demonstrate proper usage to family members in case of emergency.

### FIRST AID KIT

- Keep first aid materials and a book on first aid procedures in an accessible location.

### FLOORING

- Attach furniture protectors underneath furniture legs to protect floor finishes.

### LANDSCAPING

- Review and implement recommendations in the Landscaping and Grading Section of this manual.

### PLUMBING

- Locate the main water line shut-off valve and all individual plumbing fixture valves, and show all family members how to close them in case of a plumbing emergency.

### GAS

- If your home has natural gas, locate the gas shut-off valve by the gas meter and show all family members how to close it in case of an emergency.



## Every Month Checklist

### AIR CONDITIONING AND HEATING

- Check air filters and clean or replace as necessary
- Vacuum air supply and air return registers to remove dust and lint.

### GARBAGE DISPOSAL

- Clean disposal blades by grinding up ice cubes. Freshen it with baking soda and by grinding up citrus fruit rinds.
- Test and reset Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) breakers.

### INTERIOR CAULKING

- Check for cracks or separations in caulking around sinks, bathtubs, toilets, faucets, counter tops, back splashes, ceramic tile walls, ceramic floors, window sills and any other areas originally caulked by your builder. To repair these areas, use an appropriate caulking compound and follow the caulking instructions in the relevant sections of this manual.

### RANGE HOOD FAN

- Clean or replace dirty filter.

### SPRINKLER SYSTEM

- Adjust sprinkler heads for proper coverage.

## Every Six Months Checklist

### CABINETS

- Clean and apply a light coat of wax to wood-finish cabinets.

### CAULKING/PAINTING

- Check all areas originally caulked by the builder, especially exterior windows and doors.
- Check exterior paint and stain surfaces (especially stained doors) and refinish as needed.

### DOORS

- Check screws on door lock set and hardware, and tighten as necessary.
- Lubricate bi-fold and by-pass doors as necessary.
- Clean sliding door track and apply silicone spray to tracks as necessary. Caution – only use a silicone lubricant; oil will cause the rollers to deteriorate. Take the necessary steps to protect adjacent flooring from the silicone, as it may cause discoloring. Oil moving parts of the garage doors.

# Every Six Months Checklist

## **ELECTRIC**

- Check electrical extension and appliance cords. Replace frayed or split cords.

## **EXTERIOR FINISHES**

- Check for cracks and voids in exterior caulking and re-caulk as necessary. Follow the maintenance instructions contained in the painting section of this manual.

## **ROOFING**

- Visually inspect roof from the ground for broken or missing tiles or shingles and gaps in flashing.
- Check and clean gutters and downspouts, if installed.

## **AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM**

- Have HVAC contractor perform six month maintenance check up if you live in the high temperature, high humidity area.
- Ensure that air supply registers are not blocked by rugs, draperies or furniture.
- Make certain the concrete foundation that the A/C unit sits on is level.
- Remove excess leaves from vents.

## **PLUMBING**

- Check assessable water supply lines and valves to sinks, toilets, refrigerator and clothes washer. Tighten if loose or leaking.
- Clean out faucet aerators, spray nozzles and drains.
- Check pipes and drains for water leakage.

## **WINDOWS**

- Check sills for caulking cracks or separations and re-caulk as necessary.
- Check weather stripping around windows and repair or replace as necessary.
- Check windows for smooth opening and closing operation. Clean tracks and lubricate as necessary, using silicone spray.
- Inspect window screens and repair or replace as necessary.

## **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

- Check fire extinguishers to ensure they are fully charged.

## **SMOKE DETECTORS**

- Test smoke detectors and change batteries if needed. If you live in the part of the country that has Daylight Savings Time, when you change your clocks would be a good time to change your batteries.
- Clean and/or vacuum.

# Annual Checklist

## ATTIC

- Check attic vents to ensure that soffit vents are not blocked with insulation and move insulation back to its original location if there are voids on the attic floor.
- Check inside attic for signs of roof leaks. Be extremely careful not to damage or disturb electrical wiring or plumbing pipes that may be in the attic.

**CAUTION:** *Be extremely careful entering, exiting and walking in the attic. If you are unsure performing this task, you should contact a contractor.*

## CABINETS

- Check drawers and hinges for proper alignment. Tighten and adjust as needed.

## DOORS

- Check and repair or replace weather stripping on exterior doors as necessary.
- Tighten all bolts on garage door.
- Check the fit of exterior doors at their thresholds. Many designs are adjustable.

## WINDOWS

- Check all windows for gaps in caulking on the exterior of the house.

## AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM

- Have HVAC contractor perform annual maintenance check-up.

## CLOTHES DRYER

- Check dryer hose for lint. A clogged hose may decrease the drying efficiency of the dryer.

## FIREPLACE

- Have chimney professionally cleaned as necessary.
- Inspect chimney for nests.

## PLUMBING

- Remove water heater residue following instructions in the Plumbing Fixtures Section of this manual.

## PRESSURE CLEANING

- Clean roof tiles and asphalt shingles (where applicable) of mildew and dirt as necessary.
- Clean pool deck and reseal as necessary.
- Clean pavers, driveways, patios, and walks as necessary.
- Clean exterior finishes such as siding, stucco, brickwork, stone of mildew and dirt as necessary.

## SEPTIC TANK

- Check and clean as necessary.

## Seasonal Checklist

- Follow all instructions for safe operation of any fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Brush snow off gutters and away from downspouts, as applicable.
- Remove ice and snow from concrete surfaces and avoid using de-icing agents with damaging salts.
- Decorate safely for the holidays. Do not overload circuits or use worn extension cords.
- Winterize/service sprinkler system.
- On pleasant days, open windows to allow house to breathe.
- If your home has hurricane accordion shutters, tracks should be lubricated and shutters tested prior to the start of the hurricane season.

## A Special Checklist for Condensation, Mold & Mildew

### Interior Mold in Residential Buildings

Mold and mildew in residential homes is not new. Mold grows on damp or wet surfaces. Left untreated, mold spores can become airborne. Spores are like seeds when they settle on vulnerable surfaces and they can consume organic material since they are part of our ecological system, helping to recycle organic material. Based on this information, detecting moisture is the key to resolving the problem. Musty air in the home is a warning sign. Homeowners need to be aware that, under the right conditions, some condensation could appear on walls, windows or in the air conditioning vents. In such cases, one must clean and dry these areas and increase the ventilation in the home. Obtain a dehumidifier for any area with persistent dampness, such as a basement that isn't air conditioned.

Mold can be prevented in areas where water has been spilled if a leak occurs. In such cases, water could get behind a wall and mold growth could occur. Look for discolored areas (usually black) or mold on surfaces. Such areas also can be caused by problems such as leaky pipes under sinks, windows left open for rain to come in, water leakage through uncaulked windows, leaky roofs, etc.

Uncontrolled mold can be a health hazard. Proper maintenance of your home will go a long way toward eliminating or keeping moisture and humidity to a minimum. Consult your personal physician or a local government health authority for guidance if there is any concern for your health. Use of some or all of the items below will help to eliminate major problems with mold.



## A Special Checklist for Condensation, Mold & Mildew

- Have your air-conditioning system serviced by a recognized professional company at least annually. Ask for advice from an air-conditioning specialist if you are unsure about proper usage of your air conditioner.
- When outside weather is warm with low humidity, open windows to allow air circulation through the house.
- Increase circulation of heated air.
- Run the air conditioner during humid months of the year.
- Obtain a dehumidifier for any damp areas of the home, such as steamy bathrooms, basement, indoor pool area or attached greenhouse.
- Repair any water leaks quickly.

Take measures to keep water away from the foundation. There are many other ways to care for particular situations but the best of all is to use common sense. The objective is to keep your home dry and free from leaks or water intrusion and excessive condensation.

## Chapter Two

# General Information & Safety Tips



# General Information & Safety Tips

## Introduction

Every aspect of building your home, from laying the foundation to the final coat of paint, is an art form and was done by a qualified professional selected by your builder. By following the tips in this Homeowner's Maintenance Manual you can prevent minor problems from developing into major ones. Your home will retain its value and you can experience the pride of ownership for years to come. This manual is not intended to be a "Do-It-Yourself" step-by-step guide, but it does provide useful information about the care and maintenance of your home. Please bear in mind that any repairs made by the homeowner or someone hired by the homeowner may void the manufacturer's or builder's warranty on the item being repaired.

While it is important to know what you are doing before you attempt any repair, it is equally important to know when to stop. If the project is more complex than you originally thought, and exceeds your ability to make the repair...STOP... call in someone who knows what they are doing. It is better to admit a lack of knowledge than to compound the problem and create a major expense.

Your local home improvement center or hardware store can provide you with a variety of services beyond selling you merchandise. They usually have "Do-It-Yourself" books that provide detailed information about specific areas of the home. Many of them offer classes on a wide range of subjects from carpet and tile installation to selecting the proper tools for any given job. Frequently the person waiting on you can provide useful information that will help you in selecting the right materials for the project.

## Personal Safety

Accidents happen. They are called accidents because they were never intended to happen. They frequently occur because of the lack of precaution by the injured party. If hindsight was foresight, very few homeowners would be found in hospital emergency rooms.

A few dollars invested in eye protection, proper shoes and gloves may prevent a serious injury. When working around fiberglass insulation (*such as attic crawl spaces*) always wear long sleeves and gloves. You should take a shower as soon as possible after finishing the project.

Every home should have one or more ladders. In selecting a ladder make sure that it meets your needs for reach and weight requirements. When working on or around electrical fixtures, never use an aluminum ladder. A ladder made of fiberglass is recommended for most applications. Pay close attention to the warning labels affixed to the ladder. They are there for your protection.

It is important to understand the function of any tool that you are using, especially power tools. Read all accompanying instructions carefully before attempting to use the tool.

If your home has a home stand-by generator, read the manufacturer's maintenance manual before attempting any periodic maintenance.

Keep a first aid kit on hand at all times. Remember, the trauma of a trip to the emergency room may be avoided if you use a little common sense when working in or around your home.

# Utility Lines, Cables & Pipes

## Introduction

Your local utility companies provide a variety of services to your home. In most cases, even though their lines cross your property, you have no ownership or control over them until they pass through a metering device (*electricity, water and gas*). In the case of telephone lines and coaxial cable, they must pass through an exterior wall. Service or alterations to any utility line should be done only by a competent, licensed professional.

The illustration on the next page will provide a basic idea of where to look for various utility lines.

## Emergency Shut-offs

Your builder will show you where the main shut-off valves and switches are located in your home. Every qualified person in your home should know where these switches and valves are located and how to turn them off in an emergency.

## Electricity

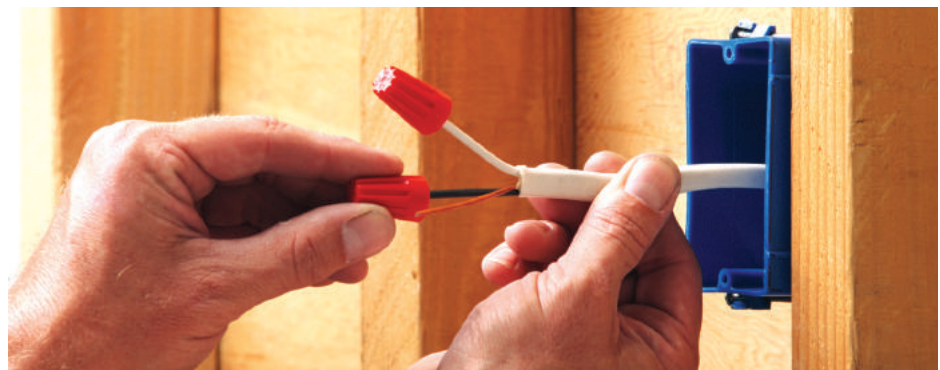
Electricity does not discriminate. It is an equal opportunity killer. Never attempt any electrical repair unless you absolutely know what you are doing. For any additional service needs or major repairs, you should call a licensed electrical contractor.

Even when attempting a minor repair, you must have the electricity turned off to the device you are working on. This must be done at the circuit breaker box. Turning off a wall or lamp switch will not always prevent a shock.

Every receptacle, lamp and electrical device is controlled by a circuit breaker in the main circuit breaker box. Each circuit should be labeled and you should know its function. Never try to defeat the purpose of a circuit breaker. If it frequently “trips,” this is generally a sign of a more severe problem, and a competent, licensed electrician should be called. The following simple steps may prevent a severe electrical shock:

- A. Open the circuit breaker box and locate the proper circuit breaker. Turn it off.
- B. Close the panel door and tape a note across the front of the box informing others that you have turned off a circuit breaker and not to touch anything. If you can lock the panel, do so.

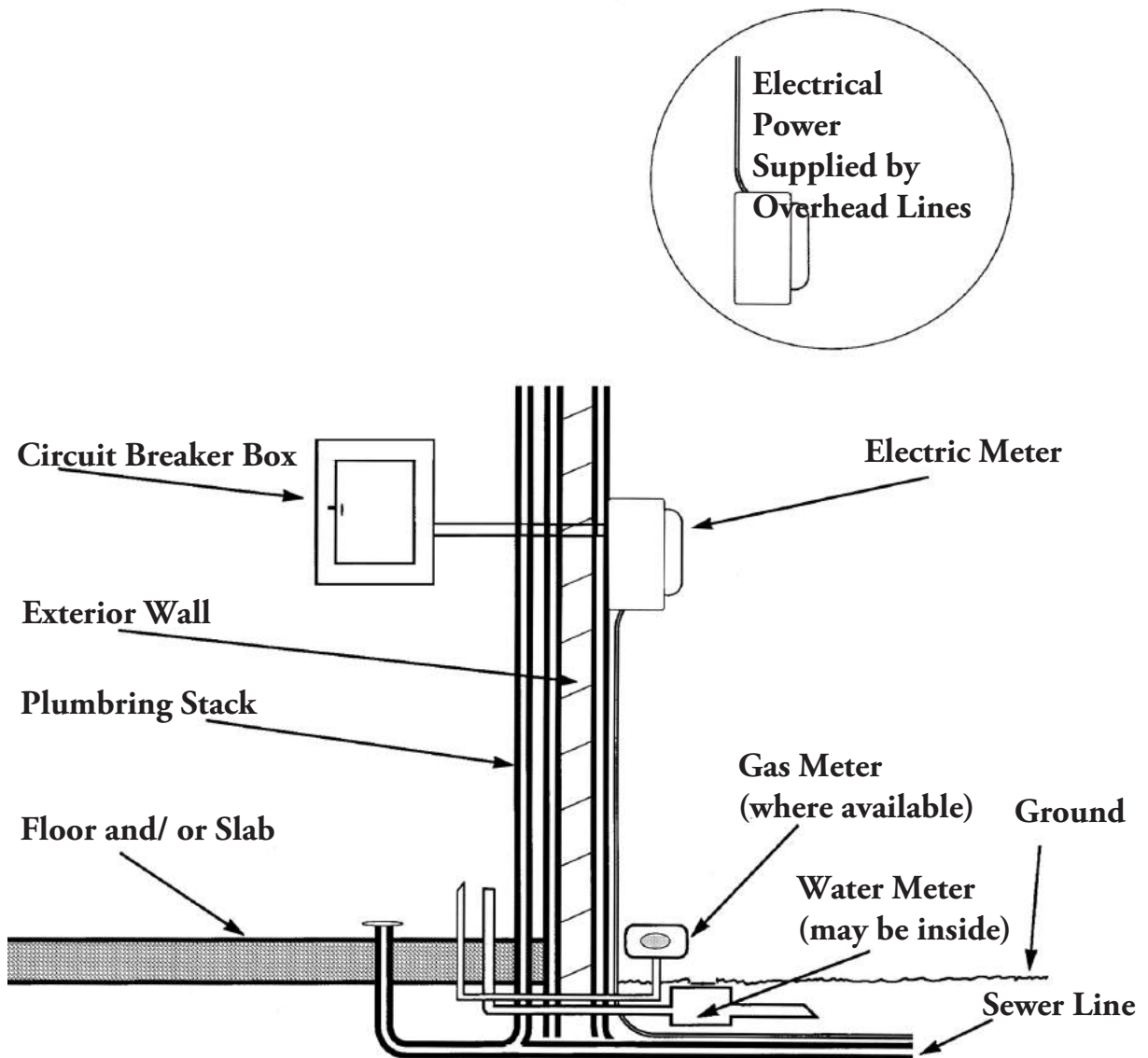
**DO NOT ATTEMPT ANY ELECTRICAL REPAIR UNLESS YOU ARE LICENSED AND QUALIFIED!!**





# Utility Lines, Cables & Pipes

NOTE: Entrance of telephone and coaxial television cables may be at the point most convenient to the utility company.



# Chapter Three

## Homeowner's Maintenance Information



## A. Air Conditioning and Heating Equipment

The air conditioning and heating equipment was installed by the HVAC (Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning) contractor.

The air conditioning and heating system(s) provides year-round climate control and consists of a thermostat to control temperature, an air handler unit to heat or cool the air, a filter to remove particles from the air, plus a fan unit to distribute and circulate air throughout the home via ducts and registers. Air conditioners have an outdoor condensing unit or compressor which must be kept sufficiently free of obstructions (such as shrubbery) to allow air to flow freely.

**NOTE:** *In certain areas of the country that experience extreme high temperatures, water cooled air conditioning systems may be used rather than air cooled systems. The difference between the two systems is how the heat is removed from the condenser. Water cooled units flow water over the condenser coils to remove heat and air cooled systems blow air across the condenser to remove heat. In areas where there can be hard freezes, water must be drained from both the condenser unit and water supply line.*

**NOTE:** *Window coverings should be installed to maintain consistent room temperature. Direct sunlight entering the house will increase the temperature in the affected area and will also fade furniture and carpets.*

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Service Contract:** When there is a heavy demand on your HVAC system, you are encouraged to take advantage of the extended annual service contract that is available from your air conditioner supplier. This contract typically provides seasonal check-ups of the heating and cooling components, plus periodic cleaning; the advantage being that scheduled service may reduce system failure by preventing problems before they occur.

#### Before Calling for Service:

1. Check to see that the thermostat is properly set.
2. Check the circuit breaker in the panel box. If tripped, reset by switching the breaker from the full "Off" position to "On." If the circuit breaker will not reset, contact the HVAC contractor. (See Circuit Breakers in the Electrical System Section.)
3. Check the electrical disconnect switch, located on or near the air handler, and reset.
4. Check the exterior disconnect switch located outside the home near the compressor, and reset.

## B. Air Filter

The air filter, located adjacent to the air handler unit or in the return air grille, helps reduce the flow of dust into the air. As the filter collects dust, it reduces the system's efficiency and must be either cleaned or replaced. Your builder has installed one air filter in each filter location and will, at the walk-through, demonstrate proper filter installation, cleaning and replacement procedures. After that, the regular cleaning, replacement and maintenance of air filters is the homeowner's responsibility.

# Air Conditioning & Heating

## Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

Monthly filter cleaning or replacement will provide cleaner air, improve air flow, and help reduce utilities costs. To remove, clean or replace filters, turn the air conditioner/furnace and fan off using the thermostat control, then carefully remove the old filter and clean, or insert a new one.

Replacement filters are available through hardware and home supply stores. Make sure to buy the correct size for replacement.

**NOTE:** *There are filters available that need to be replaced only every three (3) months and other filters that are washable and do not need to be replaced.*

## C. Thermostat

The thermostat controls the entire heating and cooling system. The thermostat provides a fan switch to circulate the air when neither heating nor cooling is needed.

To maximize energy efficiency and minimize utility bills, set the thermostat to a comfortable level normally between 68° F to 71° F for heating, and between 76° F to 78° F for cooling, and leave it there. Then set the fan switch to either the "ON" or "AUTO" position.

The less frequently you change the thermostat setting, the more comfortable you will be, the lower your utility bills will be, and less wear and tear on the system's compressor will incur. Changing settings frequently will cause the supplemental heater to run more often, and turning the system on or off expends extra energy to bring the temperature back to a comfortable level. Setting air conditioning controls too low does not cool the home faster and the same principle applies to heating.

Programmable thermostats can save energy and money without sacrificing comfort and convenience by reducing the amount of time heating and cooling systems operate. You can program different temperature settings for different times of the day and days of the week based on when you are in your home. When programmed properly, the heating and cooling systems will operate less frequently, consume less energy and lower utility costs. Programmable thermostats can be purchased at hardware and home supply stores.

## D. Air Distribution System

**Duct Work:** Ducts carry and distribute heated or cooled air to each room.

**Registers:** Two kinds of registers are used: air supply registers (located on the wall or ceiling) that deliver warm or cooled air into the room; and air return registers (located on walls, ceilings or under the air handler access door) that return air from the room back into the air handler fan to be re-heated or re-cooled.

To regulate temperatures on different floors or rooms during different seasons, adjust the air supply registers by partially opening or closing them, thus restricting or moving additional air into each room.

Vacuum supply and return registers to ensure they remain dust free. Check that registers are not blocked by draperies, furniture or other obstructions that restrict normal air flow.

# Air Conditioning & Heating

Interior doors in each room are undercut to allow return air to circulate throughout each room when the doors are closed. Do not close doors to regulate room temperatures.

**Caution:** *Burning candles for prolonged periods of time may, in some instances, create a phenomenon known as “ghosting.” Ghosting occurs when soot from a burning candle is released into the air, carried throughout the house through the air conditioner, and expelled through the vents. The soot adheres to all surfaces including ceilings, fabrics and countertops. It is especially visible on the carpet at the base of bedroom doors. Cleaning is very difficult and is a homeowner’s responsibility.*

## To avoid ghosting in your home, follow these few simple steps:

1. Buy candles made with hard wax and with thin braided wicks that curl over when burned.
2. Buy candles with low aromatic properties and with wicks that burn with a low flame.
3. Buy candles with cotton or paper wicks and refrain from buying candles with metal-core wicks.
4. Do not allow candles to smoke and keep them out of drafts.
5. Keep matches and wick debris out of the candle.
6. Extinguish candles after one hour of continuous burning. Allow the candle to cool before relighting.
7. Large numbers of candles should be burned in the fireplace with the damper open to allow the smoke and emission to escape.
8. Stop using candles that leave a visible soot ring on their containers.

## E. Exterior Compressor/Condensing Unit

### Homeowner’s Maintenance Guidelines

Keep the condensing unit (*compressor*) level and keep the area surrounding the unit clear to allow unimpaired air flow. Do not plant bushes too close to the unit and be careful that dirt, leaves and grass clippings are cleared away. For a thorough cleaning, contact an HVAC contractor. Do not build a deck around or over the compressor unless there is an 18 inch clearance on the sides and a 6-foot minimum clearance on top.

## F. Condensate Control

Dehumidification is part of the function of your air conditioning system. The moisture removed from the air is condensed into water and is then referred to as “condensate.” The condensate forms and is collected on the evaporator coil which is located in the air handling unit (*except on one-piece package units*). The condensate drain removes the water. Regular maintenance should be performed by the A/C contractor of the drain pan and line to control algae build-up and eliminate water leaks.

### Homeowner’s Maintenance Guidelines

Install algae tablets in the condensate drain pan regularly. Flush condensate drain pan and lines regularly. Drains should be flushed from the inside of the house toward the outside. Never open the air handling unit without first disconnecting the power. Algae tablets are available through your air-conditioning contractor or home improvement center.

# Air Conditioning & Heating

## Helpful Hints:

- a. Check and replace or clean filters every month. Clogged filters mean higher operating costs.
- b. Don't try to maintain different temperatures in different rooms by totally closing duct outlets — you will unbalance the system and reduce its efficiency.
- c. Use bath and kitchen exhaust fans sparingly when air conditioning is operating.
- d. To reduce the time your air conditioner must be on, do heat-producing chores such as baking and dish washing, during the cooler hours in the morning or evening.
- e. Check weather stripping and caulking around doors and windows for leaks.
- f. Shade your home with trees wherever possible.
- g. Keep all windows and exterior doors shut when air conditioner is on.
- h. Do not short-cycle your compressor by moving the thermostat up and down too rapidly. Set your temperature slowly and leave it for at least five minutes before resetting.
- i. In case of outside temperatures exceeding 95° F, a differential of 15° F is acceptable.

## G. Heat Pump

Your home may be equipped with an electric, forced-air heating system that includes a heat pump. The heat pump is an electrically powered, single-refrigeration unit that provides both heating and cooling functions. It operates on the principle that outdoor air, even in winter, contains heat or thermal energy. During winter, the heat pump draws in outside air, extracts the heat and then circulates it throughout the home. In the summer the process is reversed, whereby the heat pump removes heat from indoor air, discharges it outdoors and then circulates cool air throughout the home.

A heat pump can be expected to operate continuously if outside temperatures fall below 50°F. Heated air coming from the registers feels cool to the touch. This is normal since the heat pump generates a low level of heat, sometimes below 90°F, while normal body temperature is 98.6°F.

**Supplemental Heat:** When outdoor temperatures fall to at least 50°F, the heat pump may be unable to draw sufficient heat from the outside air and a supplemental heating unit automatically turns on. You will know it is operating when the blue/green light on the thermostat is lit. The heating elements, located in the furnace unit's air handler, will turn on for a short time. The supplemental heat will also turn on if the thermostat is adjusted more than two degrees above room temperature.

**Emergency Heating:** Should the heat pump fail, activate the emergency switch on the thermostat. The red light indicates that it is on. This will stop the heat pump from operating and will provide supplemental heat until the HVAC contractor arrives.

**Defrosting:** During winter, ice can accumulate on the sides of the heat pump's exterior coil. When ice covers 80 percent of the surface, the system automatically activates a defrost cycle that lasts about five minutes, heating the coil to melt the ice. It will also activate the supplemental heat to prevent ducts from blowing cold air into the home during the defrost cycle. This process may occur several times each day, and you will notice that steam rises from the unit when it occurs. This is completely normal and is not cause for concern.

# Air Conditioning & Heating

## **Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines**

Keep the heat pump unit level and keep the area surrounding the unit clear to allow unimpaired air flow. Do not plant bushes near the unit and be careful that dirt, leaves and grass clippings are cleared away. For a thorough cleaning, contact an HVAC contractor.

Do not build around or over the air conditioner unless there is an 18-inch clearance on the sides and a 6-foot minimum clearance on top.

## Solutions to Common Heating and Air Conditioning Problems

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	SOLUTION
Air temperature in different rooms or floors is uneven.	Air distribution unbalanced. Registers are obstructed.	Adjust air registers. Clear obstructions away from registers.
Reduced air flow or excessive dust on vents and registers.	Dirty air filter.	Clean or replace air filter as necessary.
Indicator light on thermostat stays on continuously.	Disconnect breaker at panel box tripped.	Check disconnect breaker. Reset or replace as necessary.
Heat pump, fan or air conditioner not operating.	Low refrigerant or dirty air filter.	Reset circuit breaker at panel box or unit.
Air conditioner or heat pump not operating properly.	Outside unit obstructed by debris: bushes leaves, etc.	Clear obstructions from top and sides of unit.
Inside air handler is leaking water.	Condensation drain clogged or inside coil is frozen.	Call HVAC contractor. Check manufacturer's warranty.
Inside or outside coil is frozen.	Low refrigerant or dirty air filter.	Call HVAC contractor. Clean or replace filter. Raise thermostat to 90° to thaw.
Excess water on window panes.	Excess humidity in home.	Adjust thermostat setting. Use exhaust fans while cooking or bathing.
Burning smell when winter or auxiliary heat first turned on.	Accumulated dust on electrical coils.	Normal. Happens once each year.
Blue/green light on the thermostats stays on continuously.	Disconnect Breaker tripped at heat pump.	Check disconnect breaker. Reset or replace as necessary.



## Introduction

Your home may be equipped with a variety of appliances, such as an electric oven, range hood, dishwasher, refrigerator, microwave oven, garbage disposal, washing machine and dryer. At move-in time, you should test all appliances for proper operation. Where applicable, fill out and mail in warranty card. Failure to do so may void the manufacturer's warranty. Review the manufacturer's service manuals for operation and maintenance instructions. File your manuals in a convenient location for future reference.

Many manufacturers offer toll-free customer service to answer questions about appliance problems and operation. Some helpful numbers are:

GE Service	800-432-2737	Whirlpool	800-253-1301
Kitchen Aid	800-422-1230	Jenn-Air	800-688-1100
Sub-Zero	800-222-7820	Sears (Kenmore)	800-366-7278
Frigidaire	800-374-4432	Amana	800-628-5782
Maytag	800-807-6777	LG Service	800-243-0000
In-sink-Erator	800-558-5700		

For appliance repair protection that extends beyond the manufacturer's warranty period, we suggest you consider a service contract available through an appropriate local contractor or the manufacturer.

If you purchase your own appliances, carefully measure existing appliance openings to ensure proper fit. Check that doorway widths leading to the appliance location are wide enough to move the appliance through.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines Before calling for service:

If an electrical appliance fails to work, complete the following checklist before calling the appropriate contractor; otherwise you may be charged for a service call.

1. Check that the appliance is plugged in.
2. If the appliance is plugged into a wall-switched electrical outlet, make sure the switch is "ON." If the appliance is plugged into a GFCI circuit, check and reset the button if necessary.
3. The circuit breaker on the panel box controlling the appliance should be in the "ON" position.
4. Some appliances come with their own separate fuses or circuit breakers. Review the manufacturer's service manual for the exact location, then check for proper setting.
5. Annually check the dryer vent for obstructions. Accumulated lint should be removed by disconnecting and then vacuuming the dryer vent.



# Appliances

## Helpful Hints:

**Refrigerators/Freezer:** Check and clean the gaskets regularly to ensure a tight seal. Refrigerator and freezer temperatures should be set at the temperatures recommended by the manufacturer. DO NOT PLUG a refrigerator or freezer into a “ground/fault” (GFCI) receptacle, because the circuit may trip and not be discovered for some time, allowing the contents of the refrigerator or freezer to spoil.

**Dishwasher:** Use only when you have a full load. Use the shortest wash cycle.

**Cook Tops/Stoves/Ovens:** Do not allow dirt to accumulate. Clean with a recommended over-the-counter cleaner. Do not use harsh abrasive unless specified. Clean all filters regularly.

**Garbage Disposal:** Always use cold water when disposal is working. Corn cobs and husks, bones, celery or any other food that shreds should not be put into the disposal. If the machine becomes jammed, use the wrench to free the mechanism and try again. The disposal will rust if not used regularly. If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, a teaspoon of oil will help prevent the mechanism from freezing.

**Range Hood Fan or Microwaves:** The range hood fan filters collect grease and should be cleaned regularly. Soaking the filters or lightly brushing them in hot soapy water is the best cleaning method. Be sure the filters are dry before reinstalling them.

**Microwave Oven:** Be sure that vent louvers are not blocked.

# Attic

## Introduction

The attic space below the roof is part of the roof truss system. When inspecting the attic, walk on the wood members only. The drywall ceiling of the room below is not designed to support any weight.

## Homeowner’s Maintenance Guidelines

The attic truss system is not engineered to support additional weight and should not be used for any storage purpose. Materials stored can also be a fire hazard. Do not cover any vents with insulation or any other material. Insulation on the attic floor is for the thermal protection of the rooms below. If the insulation is moved, it will leave gaps between the insulation panels and may obstruct the attic vents. Always replace moved insulation back to its original position.

Building codes require attic and crawl space vents to minimize accumulation of moisture. Attic ventilation occurs through vents in the soffit (*the underside of the overhangs*) or on gable ends. Driving rain or snow sometimes enters the attic through these vents. Do not cover them to prevent this. Instead, cover the insulation in front of the vent. When you do this, precipitation that blows in safely evaporates and ventilation can still occur.

# Bathroom Maintenance

## Also see Ceramic Tile Walls and Plumbing sections

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Mildew:** Moisture and mildew problems will occur in any room where water vapor is present. To reduce mildew, turn on the exhaust fan or slightly open a window when bathing. Wipe off wet tiles when done, then hang up towels and washcloths to dry. To clean mildewed surfaces and reduce mildew odors, apply a liquid mildew agent in a well-ventilated room, followed by a disinfectant and thorough rinsing with clear water. Moisture and mildew removal is a homeowner's responsibility.

**Soap Scum:** In some geographic areas, water that is high in mineral content can contribute to soap scum build-up. To clean and remove residue, wash the affected surfaces with a mild vinegar and water solution or use mildew removers found in most stores.

**Rust stains:** The contact of wet metal on sink surfaces — for example, the bottom of a shaving cream can — may produce rust stains. To remove them, apply a powdered rust remover, carefully following the manufacturer's instructions.

# Ceramic Tile

## Introduction

The ceramic tile walls in your bathrooms or kitchen are easy to maintain and, if properly maintained, will be impervious to water. The seams, joints and sealers are not waterproof and require proper maintenance to prevent water seepage and damage to materials adjacent to and underneath the tile.

Cracks in the caulking joints between tile and tub, in the shower stall corners and at the floor, are normal and are caused by the degree of moisture present in every bathroom, as well as from the normal shrinkage of caulking material. Separation between the tub and wall tile is caused by the weight of the tub filled with water.

Re-grouting and re-caulking are Homeowner's Maintenance responsibilities for the life of the home. For other problems concerning bathtubs, sinks, etc., see the Plumbing Fixtures section.



# Grout Stain Removal Guide

Stain	Removal Agent
Grease and fats	Soda and water or commercial spot-lifter
Inks and dyes	Household bleach
Mercurochrome	Ammonia
Blood	Hydrogen peroxide or household bleach
Coffee, tea, food, fruit juices, lipstick	Neutral cleaner in hot water, followed by hydrogen peroxide or household bleach

## Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

Caulk cracks and separations of seams adjacent to tile with a top quality flexible caulk, taking care to wipe the tile clean once caulking is complete. Do not use clear silicone-based caulk since it yellows with age and stains easily. See Re-Caulking of Tubs and Showers in the Plumbing Fixtures section.

**Glazed Tile Showers:** Use an all-purpose bathroom cleaner. Let stand for five minutes, rinse and dry. Use a mixture of equal parts water and white vinegar or a commercial tile cleaner. For stubborn stains, use chlorine bleach or scouring powder containing a bleaching agent. Let stand four to six hours, then scrub and rinse thoroughly. To remove mildew, use a commercial tile cleaner or chlorine bleach or ammonia. Do not mix chlorine bleach and ammonia!

**Unglazed Tile Walls:** Sponge with a diluted solution of water and soapless detergent. For deep-cleaning, use scouring powder paste. Let stand five minutes. Then scour with a brush. Rinse and wipe dry.

1. Never use abrasive cleaners or harsh chemicals or solvents on ceramic tile.
2. Unglazed tiles may need to be sealed on a regular basis.
3. Wipe off spills immediately.
4. Never use harsh cleaning agents such as steel wool pads which can scratch or damage the surface of your tile.
5. Do not use a cleaning agent that contains color on unglazed tile. The pores in the ceramic could absorb the color.
6. Test scouring powders on a small area before using overall on tile.
7. If continuous staining is a problem on grout joints, use a sealer.

# Cabinets

## Introduction

Kitchen, laundry room and bathroom vanity cabinets are all selected for their attractive appearance, durability and ease of care. With proper maintenance, the cabinets will remain serviceable and attractive for many years.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Wood Cabinets:** Wood cabinet tone, grain and color variations are normal and reflect the natural characteristics of real wood.

Clean wood cabinets with the same gentle care you would give any fine wood furniture. A light coat of wax or lemon oil applied once or twice a year will protect the finish and enhance the appearance.

Cabinet-mounted coffee makers are not recommended since the rising steam will damage solid wood and wood veneer, causing fading or delamination. For the same reason, position regular coffee makers out from underneath the upper cabinets and near the front of the counter.

**Laminate Cabinets:** Clean laminate cabinets with soapy cloth or sponge, using a non-abrasive liquid household cleanser for more stubborn stains. There are one-step cleaning products available for laminates that clean, reduce streaking, and leave surfaces polished. As with all cleaning products, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

**Shelves:** Shelves are not designed to hold weight that exceeds 20 pounds per square foot. Keep canned goods, flour, sugar and heavier products on the bottom shelf of the base cabinets. If desired, apply contact paper to shelves to protect against scratches and stains.

**Drawer and Hinge Care:** Check the hinges at least once a year for proper alignment and tightness, using a screwdriver to make necessary adjustments. Check drawers for easy movement and apply a silicone spray to the drawer guides should sticking occur.

**Repairing Nicks and Scratches:** Hardware stores offer color-matching putty, stains, and polymer fillers to cover and repair cabinet nicks and scratches.

The homeowner is responsible for fading damage or delamination caused by heat, steam or water intrusion.

# Cable T.V. System

## Introduction

**Homeowner's Responsibility:** The homeowner is responsible for contacting the local cable company for the initial hook-up. Roof antennas and/or satellite signal receiving dishes are not allowed in some communities and you should check with your Homeowner's Association (if applicable) before proceeding with any installation.

**Foundation and Floor Slabs:** In monolithic construction, the floor slab, garage slab, foundations and footings are all poured in concrete at the same time. Most builders use heavily reinforced concrete monolithic slab construction. In some states, in order to prepare the soil for the foundation, a termite spray is applied to the ground prior to pouring the concrete slab. After the first year, it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain a termite contract.

## One thing to understand about concrete is that it will crack!

It is important to understand that concrete is a porous material that will expand, contract, and crack as a result of temperature changes, shrinkage, stress and settlement. Hairline cracks that may appear on foundation walls and be visible on garage floors are common and are usually cosmetic, as opposed to structural. Shrinkage occurs from the normal curing process of concrete that varies with the time of year and the moisture conditions that exist when the concrete is poured. Slab stress and settlement are typically caused by soil conditions and loads such as the weight of the walls. These forces can create a variety of stresses which, in combination with seasonal temperature variations, can cause concrete and masonry foundations to develop non-structural cracks.

**Home Slab and Garage Slab:** Due to the large size of concrete home and garage slabs, shrinkage cracks (less than 1/4 inch wide) are common, and are usually the result of expansion and contraction. These shrinkage cracks are normal and it is best to leave them alone, since attempts to fill the cracks will not stop the expansion and contraction. Cracks in slabs, patios, garage floors, sidewalks and driveways are common and require no additional attention. They are cosmetic in nature and do not affect the integrity of the concrete. Any attempt to repair chips or cracks in concrete will result in product and color variation.

Color variations in concrete are a common occurrence and are beyond the control of the builder or sub-contractor.

### **Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines**

Clean concrete with a solution of five tablespoons of baking soda to a gallon of water. Before using the cleaning solution, wet the floor with clear water and loosen the dirt with a steel brush or scraping blade.

A concrete sealer may be applied to the floor, following the manufacturer's directions, approximately six months after you move in. This will make it easier to clean and will reduce concrete dusting. Note: *Use of concrete sealer may make the floor slippery when wet.*

## **A. Concrete Block**

### **Introduction**

In many homes concrete blocks are used to construct the exterior walls. The concrete blocks are set in place and then reinforced with steel and additional concrete. Concrete block construction requires occasional painting and caulking. Vertical or horizontal shrinkage caused by temperature changes and home settlement are usually cosmetic as opposed to structural and are a homeowner's responsibility. Additionally, concrete block foundation walls are often covered in stucco in certain areas in the country and vertical or horizontal shrinkage stucco cracks are only cosmetic and can be sealed when the home is painted.

## B. Stamped Concrete

### Introduction

Concrete is placed between forms, color hardener is applied to cover the surface then troweled into the surface; color release is applied, then tools are placed to stamp the pattern a minimum of 21 days later, the driveway or patio will be pressure cleaned and sealed.

## C. Decorative Concrete Topping (Spray Deck)

### Introduction

Spray Deck is a decorative type of material that can be applied to a 4" concrete surface. It is generally used around pools and patios.

In most cases, exterior concrete cracks are due to expansion and contraction because of soil movement, temperature variations and pool settling.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Per manufacturer's instructions:** To remove dirt, mildew, etc., hose down area with water and sprinkle powdered laundry detergent on tile deck and scrub with a soft nylon brush. Let sit five minutes and hose off immediately. Work in small areas so mixture does not dry onto surface. Do not use any abrasive chemicals or pool water which contains chlorine bleach, acid or household bleach. Do not pressure clean deck unless you intend to reseal and stain; it can scar and remove surface.

## D. Driveways, Sidewalks, Patios, Porches, Steps and Stoops

### Introduction

In most cases, exterior concrete cracks are due to expansion and contraction because of temperature variations, soil movement and slight home settlement. Driveways are not designed to handle the extreme weight of dual-axle and dual-wheel vehicles.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

Lawn fertilizer left on the driveway, sidewalks and patios will stain the concrete and cause rust spots. This can be prevented by immediately hosing off the driveway, sidewalk or patio after applying fertilizer.

Water used to irrigate lawns may contain mineral deposits such as iron that can cause driveway, sidewalk and patio staining and mildew. Keep excessive weight such as sand, lumber and moving vans off the driveway to prevent cracking. Rust and grease stains are a homeowner's responsibility.



## E. Pavers

### Introduction

Pavers are a concrete product. Minor cracks and chips due to production, transportation, handling and installation will be present. Color variations between pavers may also be present initially, but will diminish as they cure. Efflorescence is a whitish haze that may occur during the first six months. It is a salt deposit brought to the surface by evaporating water. This haze will eventually wear off or it may be removed by using a special cleaner.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

Pavers can be pressure cleaned/washed periodically. Weed killer should be applied to the joints to inhibit weed growth.

**NOTE:** *During pressure washing do not apply pressure directly to the joints as this will remove the sand and possibly dislodge your pavers and cause sinking. Pavers can be sealed eight weeks after installation. They should be pressure washed and allowed to dry several days without rain or sprinklers hitting them prior to sealing.*

Re-sanding, sealing and weed removal is a Homeowner's Maintenance responsibility. Do not seal if efflorescence is present. Do not seal if pavers are damp or moist.



## F. Blacktop Driveways

"Blacktop" or asphalt driveways require little or no structural maintenance for quite a few years. As the driveway ages, the deep black color will most likely fade and appear light black or gray. The blacktop can be brought back to look like new by applying a seal coat annually or as often as desired. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions when applying the new material. For extensive and structural repairs, we suggest you retain a professional asphalt contractor.

To extend the life of the asphalt driveway, avoid gasoline or oil spills if possible. Clean off any excessive fertilizer that may fall on the driveway as soon as possible in order to avoid discoloration.



## Introduction

Condensation, or the appearance of moisture that occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with a colder surface, is most prevalent in new homes, especially during the first year. This is caused by the large quantities of water used to build the new home, from the concrete foundations to the paint on the walls. As this water evaporates, and the drying out process occurs, the moisture takes the form of condensation on interior windows.

Another source of indoor humidity is everyday water usage. For example, a family of four doing laundry, bathing, and using the dishwasher, puts approximately 2 to 5 gallons of moisture into the air every day.

### **Window condensation is produced by conditions beyond your builder's control.**

Mildew is a fungus that spreads through the air in microscopic spores. They love moisture and feed on drywall surfaces or dirt. On siding, they look like a layer of dirt. Cleaning mildew from your home is your responsibility. Solutions that remove mildew are available from local paint or home improvement stores. Wear protective eyewear and rubber gloves for this task; the chemicals that remove mildew may be unfriendly to humans.

## Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Ventilation:** Proper ventilation is the safe and steady way to reduce indoor humidity, condensation and mildew.

1. Ensure that the clothes dryer is properly vented to the outside and that the vent is clear of obstructions and lint. Do not push the dryer too far back or the vent hose may become kinked and therefore obstructed. By placing a 2x4 piece of wood behind the dryer, this situation can be prevented.
2. Kitchen, bath and utility exhaust fans should be used to carry moist air outside. Use the fans for short time periods since they exhaust cooler air-conditioned air outside the home.
3. Adjust the registers to maintain even temperatures throughout the home. Do not try to speed up the evaporation process by creating extremely high temperatures in the wintertime. This will cause the house to dry out unevenly, creating cracks and other problems.



# Countertops & Vanity Tops

## Introduction

Kitchen and bathroom counter tops are covered with laminate material or cultured marble.  
(For ceramic tile countertops, see *Ceramic Tile* section.)

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Laminate Counter Tops:** Clean laminate counter tops with a soapy cloth or sponge, or use a non-abrasive liquid household cleaner for more stubborn stains. There are one-step cleaning products available for laminates that clean, reduce streaking and leave surfaces polished. As with all cleaning products, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

**Caution:** Keep standing water away from the backsplash, sidesplashes, seams and seal around the sink. These areas are prone to water damage, since excessive moisture will eventually break down the seal and cause swelling or delamination of the counter top. Check seams periodically and re-caulk as necessary.

If countertops or back splashes swell or buckle, it may be due to not maintaining the caulking. This is an important part of your routine maintenance. Joints in laminated surfaces should be periodically caulked to maintain a dryer moisture barrier.

## A. Cultured Marble Vanity Tops

Clean cultured marble with a damp cloth and a non-abrasive detergent. When re-caulking, use a flexible caulk. A gel-gloss or aerosol spray may be used for polishing.

### Counter Top Precautions:

1. Keep counter top dry at all times.
2. Excessive heat can cause charring, burning, lifting or blistering. Do not place hot irons or burning cigarettes directly on counter top surfaces. Use protective hot pads or trivets under countertop electrical appliances.
3. Always use a cutting board since knives will cut the surface.
4. Steam from an open dishwasher may cause swelling and delamination. Allow time for the dishwasher to cool before opening the door. To further reduce moisture damage, apply a silicone spray to the underside of counter tops, directly over the dish washer and two feet left and right of the dishwasher.
5. Do not use clear silicone caulk, as it yellows with age and stains easily.



# Countertops & Vanity Tops

## B. Ceramic Tile Countertops

Clean countertop tiles with a damp cloth and remove accumulated film with a soapless, non-abrasive detergent or tile cleanser. Use a mild vinegar and water solution to remove grease and soap scum. Keep white tile seams clean by brushing with diluted bleach in a well-ventilated room.

Apply a grout sealant with a small brush to reduce grout staining, taking care to keep the sealant off the tile surface.

Caulk cracks and separations of seams adjacent to tile with a silicone caulk, taking care to wipe the tile clean once caulking is complete. Do not use clear silicone caulk, as it yellows with age and stains easily.

Countertops can be damaged by dropped objects or by forcefully hitting the counter edges.

## C. Natural Stone Countertops

**Granite** - Granite is a type of real rock called igneous rock, which means it was once molten and it formed as it cooled deep within the earth. It is extremely hard and durable, and practically scratch-proof. It can be highly polished and shiny or finished in a variety of other ways. Granite countertops are easily cleaned because of low porosity. Wipe up wet spills immediately, especially acidic liquids like citrus juice, alcohol or soft drinks. Never wipe countertops with an acidic cleanser (like vinegar or lemon) or harsh chemicals/abrasive cleaners. Granite should have a protective sealant applied periodically to prevent staining.

**Quartz** - Quartz, unlike granite, is virtually non-absorbent and never has to be sealed or polished and is essentially maintenance free. Only three other natural minerals; diamonds, sapphires and topaz are harder than quartz making it naturally scratch-resistant. Quartz requires little maintenance. Simply wipe surface with soap and warm water on a regular basis to maintain its beauty and shine.

## D. Solid Surface Countertops - Man Made

**Such as, but not limited to, Formica, Corian and Wilsonart Laminate**

Caring for your solid surface countertop is as simple as wiping the surface with a damp cloth. If a stain develops, wipe it away with soap and water. If this does not remove the stain, consult your manufacturer's instructions on products which can be used on your top. Do not expose the surface to harsh chemicals such as paint remover, turpentine, nail polish remover or stove and drain cleanser. If these chemicals come in contact with the surface, immediately wash them off with water, using appropriate safety measures to avoid injury.

Although solid surfacing can be repaired, certain steps should be taken to protect it. Be sure to use a cutting board instead of cutting directly on the surface. Hot pans and heat-producing appliances, when set directly on the countertop, can mar the product's beauty.

## Introduction

Your home comes with a variety of doors, which may include interior doors, French doors, louver doors, bi-pass and bi-fold doors, sliding glass doors, exterior doors and garage doors.

## A. Interior Doors

Interior doors expand and contract in reaction to temperature and moisture changes, and will be wider in humid summer periods and narrower during dryer winter months.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Sticking Doors:** Home settlement or damp weather may cause swelling that puts the doors out of alignment. In some cases, this may only be temporary due to seasonal variations, and the sticking will tend to correct itself without any adjustment.

#### If door adjustment is required:

1. Check hinge screws for tightness.
2. Fold sandpaper around a wooden block and sand the edge that sticks. A small plane can also be used, but be careful not to remove too much material from the door. Also the use of a bar of soap on the door top and frame may help.
3. Always paint or varnish sanded or planed areas to protect the wood from future moisture penetration and sticking.

**Door Precautions:** Interior doors are usually hollow core and are not designed to support attachments and hanging accessories. Hanging heavy items on door knobs, or at the top of a door, can damage hardware and hinges. These doors are also undercut to allow air movement.

**Slamming:** Slamming doors can damage both doors and jambs, and can even cause cracking in walls. Teach children not to hang on the doorknob and swing back and forth; this will loosen the hardware and cause the door to sag.

**Shrinkage:** Use putty, filler or latex caulk to fill any minor separations that develop at mitered joints in door trim. Follow with painting. Panels of wood doors shrink and expand in response to changes in temperature and humidity. Touching up the paint or stain on unfinished exposed areas is your home maintenance responsibility.

## B. Bi-Fold and Bi-Pass Doors

Keep the door tracks free of paint and dirt, and apply a small amount of silicone spray to the guide edges of the tracks.

## C. Sliding Glass Doors and French Doors

Keep sprinklers away from sliding glass doors and French doors when watering the lawn. Sliding glass doors have been sealed against water, but occasionally, high winds and driving rains can

create a vibration that causes some leakage. Neither this, nor the water that accumulates in the tracks, can be prevented. This is also true for French doors.

The sliding tracks should be kept clean and free of debris. Rollers should be lubricated and adjusted if needed to maintain a smooth operation.

Clean glass with a spray glass cleaner and wipe frames with sudsy water and a soft cloth. Periodically clean the bottom of the door track, and check to ensure that drain holes are clear of obstructions. To keep the doors moving freely, apply a silicone spray to the tracks. Do not use oil, which may cause premature deterioration of the rollers.

In some cases, the glass is tinted to help block the rays of the sun. If you feel you need solar protection film on your glass, it is important to note that **ALL SOLAR FILM MUST BE APPLIED TO THE INSIDE PANE OF GLASS**. Otherwise, heat build-up between the layers of glass will cause the glass to crack.

## D. Exterior Doors

An exterior door that is properly aligned, fitted, weather-stripped and maintained will help control energy costs. Exterior doors are often steel-clad or fiberglass to prevent warpage and to maximize insulation. An exterior door will warp to some degree, due to temperature differences between the inside and the outside surfaces. Warpage should not exceed 1/4" measured diagonally from corner to corner.

**NOTE:** *Wood exterior doors should be checked every six months for signs of weathering and repainted as necessary.*

**Painting:** Steel-clad or fiberglass doors are maintenance-free and require little attention except for painting and upkeep from dents and scratches.

**Weather stripping:** Weather stripping on exterior doors helps maintain the home's energy efficiency, preventing the loss of conditioned air, and reducing the infiltration of outside air. Weather stripping must remain in place to operate effectively.

1. Replace weather stripping that becomes loose or damaged.
2. Prolong the life of vinyl and rubber weather stripping by applying a silicone spray.
3. The sweep weather stripping at the bottom of the door may require replacement from time to time. To replace, remove the sweep and match with a replacement available at any hardware store.
4. To raise or lower the threshold, adjust the screws on the wood or metal portion of the threshold. Keep threshold caulked at all times.
5. Keep sprinklers away from doors.

## Door Hardware/Locks/Hinges/Keys

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

The brass door locks, door handles, hinges and stoppers used throughout the home are exposed to both inside and outside elements, pollution, extreme elements, and common everyday use. This may cause them to discolor or become pitted. The manufacturer does not guarantee the finish of any product. Clean these with a damp cloth and do not use abrasive cleanser or solvents. Periodic polishing, following manufacturer's recommendations, will help maintain the original luster and appearance. Do not use brass polish on lacquered brass parts or fixtures.

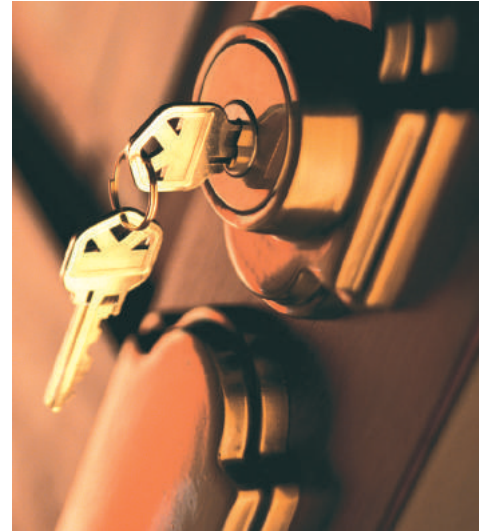
**Locks:** Lubricate door locks with graphite or other waterproof lubricant. Avoid oil, as it will gum up.

**Failure to Latch:** If a door will not latch because of minor settling, you can correct this by making a new opening in the jamb for the latch plate (*remortising*) and raising or lowering the plate accordingly.

**Hinges:** You can remedy a squeaky door hinge by removing the hinge pin and applying a silicone lubricant to it. Avoid using oil, as it can gum up or attract dirt. Graphite works well as a lubricant but can create a gray smudge on the door or floor covering beneath the hinge if too much is applied.

**Keys:** Keep a duplicate privacy lock key where children cannot reach it in the event a youngster locks himself or herself in a room. The top edge of the door casing is often used as a place to keep the key. A small screwdriver or similarly shaped device can open some types of privacy locks.

Your interior door locksets can loosen over time. If you notice excessive play in the lockset, we recommend tightening the screws located in the cover plate. If the doorknob has become inoperative, it could mean that the interior mechanism has slipped out of place. Remove the knob, realign the interior mechanism, reset the knob, then tighten the exterior screws. Should a lock be hard to operate, apply a graphite lubricant to the keyhole and lock mechanism. This will usually help the lock to operate more smoothly.



## Introduction

The electrical system in your home is designed for safe, trouble-free service and meets both local and national electrical code requirements. Any additional alteration or modification to the original electrical system installation will void all applicable warranties.

### Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines

**Electrical Safety Cautions:** Do-it-yourself electrical wiring is dangerous. Improper electrical wiring is dangerous. Improper electrical repairs can endanger the lives of your family and jeopardize your homeowners insurance in the event of fire or electrical injury. Always use a licensed electrician to make electrical repairs, adjustments and additions.

**Electrical Storm Caution:** It is recommended that you unplug television sets, computers and telephones during electrical storms.

**Power Failure:** If the electrical power goes out, check first to determine if neighbors are also without power, and if so, contact the utility company. Before attempting to reset the circuit breakers, check that power has been restored to the area. If neighbors have power, check the main circuit breaker in the panel box. See Homeowner's Maintenance Guidelines under Circuit Breakers in this section.

Be aware that not every electrical power problem is due to problems within the home's electrical system. Utility companies experience a variety of situations that effect power supplies, including power surges and interruptions, peak overload periods, and even total shutdowns.

**Electric Meter:** The utility company installed an electric meter to measure your electric usage for billing purposes. Their invoice is based on kilowatt-hours used over a given time period, with a kilowatt-hour being the energy expended by 1000 watts for one hour. Should you have any questions about the meter functions, please contact the customer service department at the utility company.

**Circuit Breakers:** Electrical wiring and appliances are protected by circuit breakers to stop circuit overloading. The main circuit breaker is located in the electrical panel box, and if tripped for any reason, entirely cuts off all electricity to the house. The smaller circuit breakers within the panel box control appliances, wall switches, lighting, and the HVAC system, and each switch should be clearly marked as to what it controls. Do not tamper with the electrical service entrance cable that provides power to the service panel.

**Circuit Tripping Causes and Remedies:** Thunderstorms, lightening and power failures can cause circuit breakers to trip. If only your home is affected, try to reset by switching the breaker to full "OFF" then back to full "ON" position. If this does not reset the breaker, or if the breaker continues to trip, do not continue resetting the breaker as this can damage the panel box, wiring, or the appliance that it controls. Call a licensed electrical contractor for a service inspection.

Overloaded circuits can also cause tripping. This occurs when too many appliances are used on one circuit. To reduce the load, remove plugs of appliances that may cause the overloading, then reset the breaker as described above. If you install a microwave oven or other appliances that require large electrical loads, you may need a licensed electrical contractor to add additional wiring to accommodate the load.

**Outlets and Wall Switches:** If an electrical outlet does not work, check first to make sure that the outlet is not controlled by a wall switch. If the outlet still does not operate, contact an electrical contractor.

# Electrical System

**Do not plug a refrigerator or freezer into a GFCI controlled outlet. There is a good chance that if the GFCI trips, your food will be ruined before you notice the problem.**

**Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters: GFCI electric outlets help to prevent electrical shock, and are installed in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and exterior areas where water may be present. GFCI receptacles are sensitive to power surges and interrupt power under certain conditions to prevent injury. Do not plug refrigerator or freezers into GFCI outlets.**

GFCI outlets are often wired in a series. For example, the garage GFCI outlet controls the bathroom, and may possibly control other outlets throughout the home. In other words: if the electrical outlet in the bathroom is not functioning, check the GFCI in the garage. Also be aware that some homes have multiple GFCIs, so be certain to inspect and reset the affected outlet.

If a GFCI receptacle is not functioning, press the "RESET" button on the wall plate to restore proper operation. If that does not work, check and reset the circuit breaker in the panel box first, then press the GFCI Reset button. If the outlet still fails, it may indicate a short in the appliance. If other appliances will not operate, an electrician should be contacted and the GFCI replaced. To test GFCI's, press the "TEST" button on the receptacle. The outlet should not perform. To reset, press the reset button.

## **Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter**

As of January 2002, The National Electrical Code requires all 15 and 20 ampere outlets installed in bedrooms to be protected by an Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI) in addition to standard circuit breakers in your home.

There is a difference between an AFCI and a standard 15 or 20 ampere circuit breaker. The standard circuit breaker is made to detect overheating due to overloading on the circuit, not due to electrical faults caused by electrical low level arcing which the AFCI is designed to detect. A standard breaker may not trip if not enough electrical current has flowed through to trip it due to heat buildup within the breaker. The AFCI can sense when an arc or short circuit is about to spark and quickly trip the circuit.

### **Arc faults are typically the result of:**

- Worn electrical insulation
- Damaged plug-in appliance cords
- Punctured electrical cable from errant screws and nails
- Attaching electrical cable too tightly to the studs
- Loose electrical connections

The AFCI reset button is generally located in or near the circuit breaker panel box and should be checked regularly. If the AFCI trips after it has been reset, you should call a professional electrician.

Pre-wired for Telephones: Most homes are pre-wired for telephones. If you experience problems with the telephone system you should contact your local phone company.

If the telephone company states that there is trouble in the house wiring and your house is less than one year old, please call your builder.



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