

COVERED
with CARE

Blanket
home warranty

Welcome Home!

Congratulations! Your new home is protected by Blanket Home Warranty.

The people at Blanket Home Warranty want you to enjoy your new home every day. As a homeowner you do have maintenance responsibilities to ensure your home remains in tip-top shape and to ensure you and your family enjoys it to the utmost. Please refer to this guide to answer any questions you may have about maintaining your new home.

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Introduction

Congratulations – you are the proud owner of a brand new home!!

You have decided to make a very major investment. In fact, it could well be the biggest investment you ever make, so it is important that you protect your investment and ensure that it can grow in value with the marketplace.

Firstly, you safeguard your investment with an insurance policy to give you protection against the threat of fire and other damaging events. You make improvements and additions to it over the years to make it truly your home. You also do the necessary upkeep work, otherwise known as home maintenance, either yourself or by engaging outside experts. This helps you to guard against small problems becoming major ones, to ensure you get the best performance from all the parts of your home over their expected life cycle and lastly, to keep everything looking shiny and new.

Many of the products in your home come with specific instructions from the manufacturer that must be followed to ensure their smooth operation and full warranty coverage, so be sure to read and follow these instructions.

Blanket Home Warranty has crafted this maintenance manual with you in mind. We have chosen to present the material in the following manner. We will take you through your new home, room by room, as well as go outside with you and discuss what the key maintenance items are that should be done in each location. We will discuss them, where appropriate, under the following types of maintenance work:

- Cleaning and polishing
- Caulking and filling
- Lubricating
- Changing and replacing
- Routine checking

The Bedrooms

FLOORS

The principal item to be maintained in these rooms is the floors. If your floors are carpeted remember you can never wear out your carpets cleaning them with a vacuum!! About 80% of the soil that enters your home is dry and so is easily removed with that vacuum. Watch for spills and clean them up quickly to maintain a clean carpet. Using cold water will help with most spills. Hot or even warm water may set the stain. If water does not do the job there are many products on the market that can help you get rid of spills quickly; remember to read the label first and follow the instructions on it. As much as possible, use the mildest cleaning solution you can find. Remember, you can always use a mixture of water and vinegar to help you. Lastly, at least once a year, and perhaps more in the high traffic areas, consider either renting a carpet cleaner (available at most grocery stores) or hiring a professional steam cleaner. A clean carpet is a healthy one and a longer living one.

If your bedroom floors have hardwood on them we encourage you to review the maintenance tips supplied by the manufacturer; you may have to ask your builder for a copy of them! Here are some good basic tips:

- Sweep or vacuum the floors regularly so any abrasive dirt will not scratch the finish;
- Wipe up spills quickly;
- The pressure of high heeled shoes or furniture with pointed legs can damage your floor so be aware of their impact. With the furniture, cover the leg ends with felt pads or some other similar product. Do not use plastic casters!
- Protect your floor when moving the furniture around, again to avoid scratching;
- Avoid area mats and rugs that have a rubber or other dense backing, as this can prevent airflow and trap dirt and moisture;
- Maintaining indoor relative humidity levels as required by the manufacturer is the single most important thing you can do to ensure a long and trouble-free life for your hardwood floor, even if it's at the expense of having to live with some excess moisture build up on your windows during very cold weather.

The Bedrooms...continued

WINDOWS

The windows in your bedrooms require some regular maintenance to keep them in tip top operating condition. You need to routinely check the windows' weather stripping each fall to ensure it is in place and flexible. Don't allow paint to get on the weather stripping. Also, routinely check that any weeping holes at the bottom of your windows are free of debris so they can drain moisture easily; if clogged, clean them out. Annually clean and lubricate the window hardware to prevent excess wear of the gears. A good lubricant is a silicone spray! To clean glass surfaces use a mild soap solution, and never use alcohol or ammonia based cleaners as they can cause streaking. To clean up the kid's crayon creations or oil and grease will require a mild abrasive compound or mineral spirits applied only to the effected areas.

Be aware that in times of very cold weather your windows here and throughout your home may experience water or even some ice build up along the bottom of the windows. This is normal and is the result of too much humidity or excess moisture in your home. It can also be caused by keeping heavy curtains or even blinds closed in cold weather. When the temperature dips to below minus 15 Celsius, you will need to adjust your Humidistat to pump out less moisture and so help to minimize this buildup on your windows. There is always a trade off to be made with humidity; if you like lots of humidity you will have to clean up the excess moisture on your windows and if you like to have minimal levels of humidity then there is the increased risk of static electricity build-up. Blanket recommends strongly that you use the following table to guide you with optimal humidity levels for various exterior temperatures. Remember to re-set your humidistat when the temperature changes to ensure that balance is maintained.

Please note these are recommended settings and they may not be the best suited for your family's personal comfort. We suggest you experiment with the humidity levels to determine what level of moisture build up you are prepared to live with. Remember too much moisture or not enough may void some product warranties.

Outside Celsius temperature	Suggested inside relative humidity level
-30	20%
-25	25%
-15	30%
-10	35%
0	40%

The Bedrooms...continued

DOORS

The doors in your bedrooms (closet doors and interior passage doors) need little maintenance. The passage doors can be impacted by too little or too much humidity causing them to shrink or expand or even cause splits in the panels to occur or have the veneer delaminate. It is far better to maintain proper humidity levels in your home as set out above. Lastly if you neglect to check and adjust the basement tele-posts this can also result in door fitting problems.

If you have bi-fold or sliding closet doors there is some maintenance to do here to ensure their continued smooth operation. Routine checking is necessary with your bi-fold doors. These doors are anchored at each side with pins attached at the floor and at the ceiling with the pin in a metal track. Over time the sliding top bracket can stick and bind with wear; the bracket can either be replaced or adjusted with a set screw that can be loosened or tightened as needed.

Both sliding and bi-fold doors can come off their tracks over time especially with active children. This means you need to re-adjust the height of the door to ensure it fits in the top track by adjusting the bottom pivot pin to raise the door back up to its correct height for its best operation. The bottom pin can also be adjusted to ensure the door sits upright and square.

WALLS

Your walls need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with “drywall” and painted these walls can actually shrink, as the house settles and dries out, about one inch in height (!!!) and so you will often see minor cracking along seams and the occasional “nail pop”. This is normal and your builder will do the repairs, one time only, usually at the end of your builder’s one-year warranty obligations, by re-setting the drywall screw into the wood frame, covering it with “mud” or joint compound, and finally preparing it for paint. Minor cracking will also be repaired in the same fashion. You need to know that your builder is not required to re-paint the repaired area.

Needless to say painted walls can get scuffed, dirty, dinged up etc. through normal use. Painted walls are easily cleaned with a mild soap and warm water; don’t use abrasive scrubbing pads to try to remove scuff marks in particular as they can dull or scratch the surfaces. Remember your painted walls are NOT scrub proof and you can damage and/or remove some of the paint. Finally it is best not to wash the walls within the first three months

The Bedrooms...continued

after move-in to prevent the premature wash out of paint when washing walls and to allow the paint to fully set.

HEATING AND COOLING

The last item to maintain is the heating and cooling in these and all your rooms. Your home most likely has a forced air system using a furnace and a series of hot air ducts (to deliver heat and air conditioning) and cold air returns to maintain the desired temperature. This system is durable and reliable. There is some routine maintenance required to ensure the system operates at peak performance and delivers the required temperatures.

Your furnace has an air filter on it to capture dust; it will get dirty with usage and should be replaced according to the instructions that come with replacement filters. Failure to replace them will result not only in blocked air flow but also with the potential of higher heating bills as your furnace will run longer to achieve the desired temperature.

Make sure your air ducts are free of obstructions by removing the heat registers and removing any debris etc that is present. Give consideration as well to once every five years to engaging a commercial furnace cleaning company to vacuum out the ducts.

Adjust the dampers that sit inside the ducts that lead to each register – they are found in the joist spaces of your unfinished basement, within easy reach of your hand, or simply put your hand into the duct opening and feel for it. If you cannot find them close to the registers, then the dampers will be at the bottom of the duct. These are used to balance the system by forcing more or less heat into various rooms.

It is a real challenge to provide the desired temperature constantly to each room in your house. There are a lot of reasons for that such as:

- The location of your thermostat(s). While usually in a central location all it can do is sense the temperature of its location and so it will not be aware that it is providing not enough or too much heat to some other parts of the house.
- The number and size of your windows in each room and the amount of sunlight that comes through them influences the temperature of those rooms.

The Bedrooms...continued

- The distance a room is from the furnace will influence the temperature in those rooms; the further the room is from the furnace the less likely the temperature will be at the desired level.
- Bedrooms over unheated areas such as a garage or a cantilever will be cooler.
- Be aware of the size and location of your furniture. Do not block the registers or cold air returns.

ARC-FAULT INTERRUPTERS

All your bedroom electric receptacles now have arc-fault detection breakers to protect you from using faulty cords and/or appliances. If these units trip, check all your appliances (lamps, radios etc) and if the trip continues have the circuit professionally checked by your builder in first year. After that it becomes your maintenance responsibility.

The Bathrooms

TOILETS

Let's start with the toilet itself. Very little should go wrong in the first year with your toilets with the most likely things being a clogged toilet caused by accidentally flushing things down the toilet that don't belong there! Always have a toilet plunger nearby each toilet in your home for emergencies!

The first rule with a toilet problem is **TURN OFF THE WATER SUPPLY!** Find the shut off valve next to the toilet and turn it off as soon as possible.

Here are a few tips for some of the more common toilet problems!

How to unclog your toilet:

1. Flush once only;
2. Protect the floor around the toilet to avoid damage caused by the inevitable water spills and maybe overflow. Newspaper will do the trick or some old towels, etc.;
3. Sometime adding a few squirts of dish soap into the bowl will do the trick. If not move to plan B;
4. Pour a half bucket of very hot water from about waist level into the bowl and let it sit for a few minutes. If the clog is not released try it again or move on to the next step - plan C;
5. Using the right plunger. That is a plunger with a ball-shaped end or with a fold-out rubber flange on the bottom. The end must form a seal over the bottom of the toilet so that you force the water when you push down to go down and not back up! Insert the plunger into the bowl and press down firmly and slowly and cover the hole completely;
6. Insert the plunger into the bowl and press down firmly **BUT** slowly and ensure you cover the hole completely and that the business end of it is fully immersed in the water;
7. Pull up the plunger sharply to create suction in the drain then push back in to create pressure. The suction action is more important than the pushing action because you don't want to jam the clog in even harder. The idea is to disturb the clog with the back and forth action so that it will be loosened and move into the drain and out the sewer.

The Bathrooms...continued

Cleaning off metal marks. While it is best not to touch the toilet bowl with metal it can happen and it can leave a mark. Here's a number of ways to get rid of it!

1. Remove the standing water in the bowl – the best way is to flush the toilet and turn off the water intake so it does not refill;
2. Fill the bowl with Coca Cola!! Let it sit for at least an hour or overnight if that is possible. The carbonic acid in the real thing removes stains from vitreous china;
3. You can also scour the area with a mild scouring powder;
4. Alternately, try using a Magic Eraser from Mr. Clean.

The main cause of clogged or blocked pipes be it in the toilets, the sinks, the shower stalls rests in the “P” trap, a plumbing device full of water and used to block sewer gases from entering the interior of your home. It can be easily clogged by flushing things down the drain that shouldn't go there in the first place such as fats, greases, oils, sediments of any kind. Never put noxious or flammable items or any dangerous items down the drain!

Make sure the children do not throw toys in the toilet bowl or any other drains!

SINKS, SHOWERS, TUB/SHOWERS

Next we look at the sink, shower or tub and shower if they are combined. Once again there will be little to do to maintain these items in the first year other than cleaning them regularly with mild cleaners designed for these areas.

With showers and tubs in particular you need to pay attention to the caulking or sealing that your builder placed where two hard surfaces come together such as where the tub meets the tiled wall, the shower pan meets a tiled surface or even where the backsplash meets the bathroom countertop. The caulking is that usually white or clear flexible material that comes in a tube; its purpose is to prevent water from getting behind the joint formed by these two hard surfaces. Over time and with your regular cleaning the caulking can lose its effectiveness, can crack and separate and so permit water to get behind so you need to do regular checking of the caulking and repair as soon as you notice gaps or cracks in it. At a minimum check all caulking twice a year. Water that gets behind the caulking has the ability

The Bathrooms...continued

to do serious damage to your home and can result in an expensive repair. Not only do you need to check the caulking itself, it is also a good idea to watch for the ‘telltale’ signs of a water leak in your house – stains or discoloration of your ceilings or walls below bathrooms and kitchens in particular.

When you redo the caulking in any area you must completely remove all the old caulking first; if you do not you increase the chances that your repair will be somewhat less than perfect and that the area will leak again sooner than you had expected. Always follow the instructions on the tube!

When you clean tiles and grout, we recommend a cleaner with a silicone base that will help to maintain the seals in all your grout; this type of cleaner is readily available wherever tile and grout is sold.

We need to address the tile grout that is placed between tiles either in your shower surround, your backsplash or on the floor. Once again, we do not want water getting behind the tiles through gaps, etc. in the grout. Basically, the hints we gave for checking the caulking apply equally well to the grout as do the reasons why you must check it. Do it regularly and at least twice a year. You are looking for areas between the tiles where the grout has actually fallen out, has separated and shrunk away from the tiles or is discolored because it is holding moisture in it.

The repair follows similar processes to redoing caulking. You must remove all the grout in the immediate area before you replace it. You do need to pay attention to matching color here as well! Once again, follow the instructions on the supplier’s packaging. Once you have reset the grout there is still one more step to do: you must reseal it to increase its effectiveness as a water barrier.

COUNTERTOPS

Bathroom countertops are easy to maintain.

For granite countertops, follow some very simple procedures.

- Wipe up spills immediately
- Use mild soaps or cleaners or just water
- Rinse and dry completely with a soft cloth.

The Bathrooms...continued

While many granite countertops are sealed initially by your builder after a few years of good use unfortunately you may experience a stain on your granite.

Even though it is a rock, don't place hot pots or pans directly on it.

Here's how to remove many common stains:

How to Treat Stains on Granite Countertops

Stain	Treatment	How to Use
Most Stains	1 cup flour, 1-2 T mild dishwashing soap, create a thick paste by mixing with water	Apply to stain, cover overnight with plastic wrap, and in the morning scrape mixture from stain with wooden utensil and rinse.
Oil based stains	1 cup flour, 1-2 T mild hydrogen peroxide, form a thick paste by mixing with water	Apply to stain, cover overnight with plastic wrap, in the morning scrape mixture from stain with wooden utensil and rinse.
Organic stains	Combine 12 percent hydrogen peroxide with 2-3 drops of ammonia	This should help to remove stains like coffee and tea.
Ink on dark granite	Lacquer thinner or acetone	Apply to stain.
Ink on light granite	Hydrogen peroxide	Apply to stain.
Wine	Make a mixture of molding plaster and bleach until it becomes a paste	Apply to stain for 30 minutes, remove and rinse.

For Corian countertops follow the same easy rules as for routine granite countertop cleaning.

Do not place hot pots and pans, etc. directly on the surface as you can damage it and lead to a very costly repair, so always place a pad or a trivet between the two.

Avoid putting strong chemicals in direct contact with the countertop or sink. If a spill occurs get rid of it quickly and completely. Don't cut anything directly on your countertop.

The Bathrooms...continued

For laminate countertops, those with a thin laminate placed on top of some wood based product such as plywood or composite wood materials, again follow the same easy rules as for granite and Corian countertops set out above and you will enjoy your countertop for years to come. Laminate countertops come with glued together seams in them however, and great care must be taken to keep water and spills off of these seams because, again, over time and with leaving water to stand on a seam it will dissolve the glue, enter the resulting hole in the seam and soak into the substrate below and swell it up. These unfortunate types of situations are not covered by your new home warranty, so please take the necessary precautions to fully enjoy your countertops wherever they are located in your home.

CABINETS AND VANITIES

Next up are your bathroom cabinets and vanities; these require periodic routine cleaning. Use a mild soap or detergent mixed with water – it's all you need to keep them sparkling! Avoid the use of ammonia based cleaners and abrasive pads including your kitchen sponge that could still have traces in it of last week's scrub down of your sinks. Water spills on the cabinets must be cleaned up quickly to avoid water marks and even permanent staining.

You may find that with usage your cabinet doors will go out of alignment. While your builder will make a one-time adjustment it does become your responsibility – just some simple adjustments with the hardware used to hang the drawer fronts and the slides is all that is required.

Lastly, as many cabinets these days are made of wood they are susceptible to changes in humidity levels, and there is a lot of humidity in a bathroom, so make sure you use your bathroom fans to evacuate it and avoid the possibility of your drawers warping due to too much moisture in the air as this condition will not be covered by your warranty. As well, remove water spills and splatters quickly from the wood surfaces.

GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS (GFCIs)

While most commonly found in bathrooms and all exterior plugs, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), can be found wherever there is the potential for water and electricity to come into contact with each other and create an electric shock risk for you. A GFCI is a special type of circuit breaker created to shut off the electricity immediately it senses a ground fault, meaning the electricity is being directed to the ground outside of the circuit.

The Bathrooms...continued

The GFCI is easily recognizable by its 'test' and 'reset' buttons and it should be checked monthly by plugging in a light bulb into the receptacle and pushing the test button that should immediately turn off the light. Just push reset to reconnect the power to the receptacle.

FLOORS

Bathroom floors typically are covered with resilient flooring (it used to be called linoleum or vinyl flooring) which is a product that knows it will be cleaned on a regular basis! Make sure you have obtained from your builder the particular cleaning instructions available from the manufacturer of your resilient flooring; many manufacturers have their own or recommended cleaning products for their vinyl flooring and using a non-recommended product could not only harm the floor but also void the warranty on it.

Because it is resilient or flexible in its composition it is possible to make dents in it with heavy furniture and with chairs or even with high heels. It is best to place furniture legs into casters that have the effect of spreading out the weight over a larger area. Should the floor be damaged by moving objects or furniture over it resulting in a small tear or cut you must repair these areas immediately to protect them from further damage. Use a small amount of the manufacturer's recommended seam sealer compound and follow the instructions to seal the cut or tear and protect your floor from further damage.

This flooring can also become discolored or faded with exposure over a prolonged period of time to direct sunlight so ensure your window coverings provide some measure of protection. In addition the backing on some area rugs will cause discoloration of the vinyl flooring. Lastly some items like oven cleaners or even foods with vegetable dyes in them can cause discoloration that cannot be removed with cleaners; over time some of the discoloration may fade away.

VENTILATION

New homes on the prairies are equipped with an humidistat that automatically turn your bathroom fans on and off at prescribed intervals throughout the day. Connected to your home's central exhaust system to ensure good ventilation and air movement, make sure these devices are set properly to maintain desirable humidity levels and to prevent mildew build up in all humid areas of your home – familiarize yourself with and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.

The Bathrooms...continued

WINDOWS

With the windows simple regular maintenance and cleaning is needed, similar to what you do in the bedrooms. You need to do routine checking of the window's weather stripping each fall to ensure it is in place and flexible. Don't allow paint to get on the weather stripping. Routine check as well that any weeping holes at the bottom of your windows are free of debris so they can drain moisture easily; if clogged clean them out. Clean and lubricate annually the window hardware to prevent excess wear of the gears. A good lubricant is a silicone spray! To clean glass surfaces use a mild soap solution, and never use alcohol or ammonia based cleaners as they can cause streaking. To clean up the kid's crayon creations or oil and grease will require a mild abrasive compound or mineral spirits applied only to the effected areas.

DOORS

Bathroom doors come in a variety of shapes, from passage doors to shower doors, linen closet doors to cupboard doors. We discussed the shower door and cupboard doors earlier in this section, so we will briefly focus on the others.

The passage doors can be impacted by too little or too much humidity causing them to shrink or expand, cause splits in the panels to occur or even to have the veneer delaminate. It is far better to maintain proper humidity levels in your home. Lastly, if you neglect to check and adjust the basement tele-posts, this can also result in door fitting problems upstairs. If you have bi-fold or sliding linen closet doors there is some maintenance to do here to ensure their continued smooth operation. Routine checking is necessary with your bi-fold doors. These doors are anchored at each side with pins attached at the floor and at the ceiling with the pin in a metal track. Over time the sliding top bracket can stick and bind with wear; the bracket can either be replaced or adjusted with a set screw that can be loosened or tightened as needed.

Both sliding and bi-fold doors can come off their tracks over time especially with active children. This means you need to re-adjust the height of the door to ensure it fits in the top track by adjusting the bottom pin to raise the door back up to its correct height for its best operation. The bottom pin can also be adjusted to ensure the door sits upright and square.

The Bathrooms...continued

WALLS

Bathroom walls are covered with drywall. The walls surrounding the bathtub and shower enclosure will be tiled or covered with a one-piece tub/shower enclosure. We will focus on tile maintenance; because they are subject to a heavy build up of soap scum, body oils and hard water deposits they need regular and thorough cleaning with a damp sponge or cloth and an all purpose cleaner.

Tile grout maintenance is a special matter as well. One of the key things to do to ensure a long life to the grout is to ensure it is sealed to lock out stains. Choose a sealant that is best for you – there are two main types: one that is a topical sealer and produces a ‘wet look’ and a penetrating sealer that keeps the grout’s original look. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for applying and be sure to be aware of how often it needs to be redone under normal conditions of usage.

Not only should the grout be sealed as per above you must also do routine checking of it to identify missing or cracked grouting, make the repairs immediately and then re-seal the repaired area. Grouting will deteriorate over time and with normal usage. Water will penetrate through missing or deteriorated grout and can cause the tiles to come loose from the wall. If enough water gets behind the tiles you can have a situation where mold will start to grow.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is the hub of your home. It gets a lot of daily use. Lots of family time will be spent there enjoying meals and good conversation afterwards, not to mention the good aromas that will come from the cooking. Let's take a look at the components here.

Much of the required maintenance that goes on here is routine checking and cleaning.

You will have many areas of caulking and grouting in your kitchen. These areas include where the backsplash meets your kitchen countertop, the backsplash itself, if it is composed of tiles, will be grouted in place, your flooring may be tiles and so will have grout between them.

FLOORS

With the kitchen floors they are most likely they are covered with resilient flooring. Remember our comments on bathroom floors apply equally here to this type of kitchen floor.

More and more kitchens these days though will have a tiled floor or even hardwood in them. With a hardwood floor you must be vigilant with mopping up water spills quickly. As usual, follow the manufacturer's maintenance and cleaning instructions for years of enjoyment. Please refer back to the bedroom section of this manual for hardwood floor maintenance requirements.

If you have ceramic tiles on your kitchen floor, maintenance consists of regular cleaning and ensuring the integrity of the grout between the tiles. There are many types of all purpose cleaner to choose from. Choose one that is compatible with grout. Check out what the tile manufacturer recommends first! After cleaning the floor it is a good idea to rinse it afterwards to ensure that any excess cleaner does not dry on the floor and dull the finish surface and it can also trap abrasive dirt particles. Use dirt catching mats at every exterior door entrance.

You do need to inspect the floor grouting regularly and make any repairs to it if it has cracked or detached or come loose, allowing water to penetrate through to the underlying support. Grout can become stained and discolored as well with kitchen spills if it is not sealed. See the section above for grout sealing hints.

The Kitchen...continued

COUNTERTOPS

The countertops in your kitchen will get a lot of use, so it is important to take care of them. Never put hot objects (e.g. pots and pans empty of or filled with good food) directly on any type of countertop – laminate, granite, Corian, whatever, but if you must, first put down some type of protection or buffer between the hot object and the countertop.

Remember to clean up excess water on your counters, especially if they are laminate as you do not want the seams to be exposed to it and run the risk of them swelling up and causing significant damage to the countertop.

The countertop and/or it's integral backsplash will show some separation where installed against an outside wall; this is caused by a climatic condition known as thermal bow, the result of an extreme difference in temperature of the wall from inside to out during cold conditions. Your Builder will re-caulk this once at year end service (not during the winter!); if this recurs in following years it is considered a maintenance item.

Refer to our section above under BATHROOMS to learn how to maintain granite, Corian and laminate countertops.

DOORS

Depending on the type and layout of your kitchen you will have various types of doors: an exterior door, garden doors, patio doors, cupboard doors and interior passage doors.

Let's look at exterior door maintenance first. These doors are typically made from either steel or fiberglass with a foam core providing some insulation value and they will not warp as much with changes in temperature and humidity. The maintenance here consists of ensuring you maintain a weather tight seal when the door is closed on all four sides of the door. This means ensuring both types of weather stripping are doing their jobs – the door sweep or threshold at the bottom of the door, and on the other three sides a strip of foam or rubber attached to the door frame, against which the door snugly rests when closed providing the weather tight seal to stop wind, snow and rain from entering your home. Weather stripping does wear out with time and needs to be replaced; it's best to check it each fall before the winter sets in and replace it if necessary!

The Kitchen...continued

You may enjoy an exterior sliding screened glass or patio door. Normal usage will cause the rollers and sliders to wear out and need replacement over time. Dirt and debris in the track can accelerate that wear and tear so please do regular cleaning of the track. The hardware will also need cleaning and lubrication on a regular basis. As they are windows as well they will have weather stripping that needs to be inspected annually for wear and tear and replaced when worn out. The attached screen door can become damaged and warped due to accidental impacts. In these situations the screen door may need replacing; this is your responsibility.

If you have a pocket door it is possible that it can be knocked off its tracks by accident. If off the top track wiggling it back into place should do the trick. As well as the house settles and dries out it may bind in certain spots as you open and close it. It may warp if the house has improper humidity levels and not operate smoothly; a warped door, caused by insufficient or excessive moisture in your home may prove impossible to fix and will have to be replaced. Pocket door maintenance here consists of ensuring the tracks are kept clean and free of dirt, etc. and by lubricating the rollers.

WALLS

Lastly, your walls need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with “drywall” and painted, these walls can actually shrink (about one inch in height) as the house settles and dries out, so you will often see minor cracking along seams and the occasional “nail pop”. This is normal and your builder will do the repairs, one time only, usually at the end of your builder’s one-year warranty obligations, by re-setting the drywall screw into the wood frame, covering it with “mud” or joint compound, and finally priming it for paint. Minor cracking will also be repaired in the same fashion. You need to know that your builder is not required to re-paint the repaired area.

Needless to say, painted walls can get scuffed, dirty, dinged up etc. through normal use. Painted walls are easily cleaned with a mild soap and warm water; don’t use abrasive scrubbing pads to try to remove scuff marks in particular as they can dull or scratch the surfaces.

The Common Rooms

There are a number of types of common rooms in your home – the family room, great room, bonus room, media room, den/study, hallways and stairways, laundry room. We are not going to spend a lot of time on these rooms and areas. They are all composed of the four basic components of your home – The doors, windows, walls and floors plus the heating and cooling system. The material presented earlier especially in the bedroom section is all applicable here.

FLOORING

There are though some potential new flooring features that we must talk about. Perhaps the most common one is the increased popularity of laminate floors in recent years.

The number one rule here is NEVER allow fluids to remain on the floor for any length of time – mop them up immediately because moisture is the number one enemy of laminate flooring as it can seep into the joints and swell the core of the planks leading to unsightly buckling, warping and twisting of the flooring. Only use a damp mop or cloth to blot up spills. Do not use water to clean the laminate flooring; rather use the product recommended by the manufacturer of the laminate. If you deviate from the warranty conditions of the manufacturer that include the proper cleaners, you will lose the warranty protections.

Never use an abrasive cleaner on a laminate floor or a scouring pad. Ordinary detergents are often a no-no too because they may damage the top wear layer and void the warranty.

To repair minor scratches you can purchase a variety of color coordinated filling pens to minimize the look of the scratch. Filling putty is available for more pronounced problems.

Use felt pads under all your furniture just as you would with a hardwood or a resilient flooring installation. If you must move furniture across this floor put a rug underneath it to prevent dents or other damage to the floor. If you have pets keep their nails trimmed so they do not scratch the surface. If you or your guests have high heels – take them off.

The Common Rooms...continued

FIREPLACES

Fireplaces are most often found in common rooms though they are very popular in bedrooms as well. With a new gas fireplace it will be necessary to acclimate it to its new home. Also called “curing”, the purpose of this task is to burn off the miscellaneous paints, oils, sealers etc. that were used in its manufacture. It can take as long as a full day to complete this curing; we recommend you do it in no more than 6 hour time periods and do not run the fan when you do this because you want the firebox to be as hot as possible.

It is vitally important that you read your owner’s manual carefully and completely to familiarize yourself with all facets of its operation.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Smoke detectors are commonly found in the hallways of your house as well as close to your furnace. They are easy to maintain – test them no less frequently than once a month by pushing the ‘test’ button.

The Basement

WALLS AND FLOOR

The last part of the interior of your home we should discuss is your basement. It was constructed to minimize water build up against your concrete foundation walls or under your concrete basement floor. As a homeowner you must maintain the systems and protections provided by your builder to ensure that water continues to stay outside your home. Routine checking by doing the following maintenance items is very important:

- Ensure the backfill up against your foundation walls always slopes away from the house; do not use granular material to top up where settlement has occurred.
- Maintain the overall lot grading as established by the lot grading plan approved by the municipality; do not block any swales.
- Keep window wells (if you have them) free from leaves and other debris.
- If you have a sump pump ensure it is in good working order and remove any debris that may have found its way into the sump pit.
- Ensure the sump pump discharges its water far away from the foundation walls. Ensure the discharge hose is disconnected at outside wall during winter, but ensure the pump itself can run all year long.
- Ensure the downspout extensions are in the down position and if you have splash pads that they are in the correct position to direct the water away.

Even with doing all these things, your basement walls and floor will experience minor cracking and even some minor dampness and efflorescence may appear after a particularly heavy rain. All of this is normal.

TELE-POSTS

Your home may rely on tele-posts to provide structural support for the main beams in the basement and to help transfer the load to the foundation.

Your tele-post(s) need to be checked and adjusted regularly during the first year when the major material shrinkage is taking place and continually in areas where soil condition changes are known to occur (your builder can tell you if you are in such an area). Quite often the first sign of the need to adjust can be a hairline crack between a wall and the ceiling upstairs over the main beam, or doors may change in how they close. On an ongoing annual basis you

The Basement...continued

must check to ensure the bearing plate at the top of the tele-post is snug against the beam and adjust the tele-post if it is not snug.

Another way to determine if you need to make an adjustment is to run a strong line along the main beam from one end to the other and stretch it very tightly to ensure it is very horizontal. Then look and see if there has been any movement or deflection in the main beam supported by the tele-post. If yes, you will have noted already that it is possible to turn the tele-post up and down! Make any adjustments very slowly (no more than a ½ turn a day) until the beam and your line are both horizontal.

If you want to finish off the basement be sure not to completely box in the tele-posts so that you can get at them in the future if required!! As well do not place your studs so tightly against the basement floor and the main level framing because there will be some minor movement that will continue and this tight framing can damage not only your basement improvement but quite possibly put undue pressure and cause unwanted damage to the finishings upstairs as well. Prior to developing your basement ensure you are aware of local soil conditions and good building practices; however the use of a float space between walls and basement floor and joists is the best practice in all cases.

HOT WATER TANK

Most likely you will find your hot water tank in the basement next to the furnace. Little maintenance of it is required. It should be flushed out annually to get rid of any sediment buildup.

Your hot water tank has a pressure release valve at the top of the tank – do not tamper with it or place anything on top of the tank that could block the escape of water should the need arise.

FLOOR DRAINS

The floor drain(s) in your basement need attention simply because they rarely get any! The water sitting in the “P” trap of your floor drains may evaporate if the trap is not used and this can then allow sewer gas to enter your home. Simply make a point of pouring a cup or three of water into this drain twice a year.

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The Basement...continued

HUMIDIFIER

If there is a humidifier installed on your furnace be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for its care and usage. Most new homes no longer have a humidifier as building code changes from a number of years ago require new homes to have a programmable dehumidistat to help you manage the humidity levels in your home by automatically turning the bathroom fans on and off throughout the day.

The Exterior

Moving to the exterior of your home let's review the maintenance requirements here.

DRAINAGE AND LOT GRADING

The maintenance of the grading pattern around your home is one of the most important things you can do to prevent water from getting into your home. Your lot was graded according to a municipally approved grading plan for normal rainfalls. The purpose of the lot grading is to ensure the rain water and snow melt drains away from all sides of your home either to the street or to a catch basin or a swale (ditch).

Water left standing or collecting beside your foundation can find its way into your home and create serious pressure on the walls of your home under certain soil conditions and in freezing conditions. So it is important that you fill up any holes or areas of settlement alongside your foundation and not with topsoil or granular material. Remove the topsoil and then fill the area with compacted clay. Water will run right through the topsoil or granular material and still fill in the hole!

- You must not alter the general drainage pattern approved by the municipality without their consent.
- You should not re-direct water onto your neighbor's property.
- If you have window wells, keep them free of debris so that they may drain properly.

If you wish to do landscaping and put in plantings close to the foundation, make sure the underlying clay base has a good slope away from the foundation walls. If you install an irrigation system do not install against the foundation wall. If you install xeriscaping ensure the positive drainage away from your foundation and over the entire yard area is maintained at all times as the granular material can retain water and cause soils and water pressure problems.

Complete annual inspections of your grading in the first years of ownership as the land settles and fix any unwanted depressions or grading that is directed towards your house,

The Exterior...continued

EAVESTROUGHS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Their purpose is to collect water off of the roof and direct it away from your foundation walls. Routine checking and cleaning are required here to ensure the smooth and trouble free operation of this part of your water management systems. Check the eavestroughs twice a year and clean out any accumulated debris. The downspouts should direct water away from the foundation. Your builder may have installed flexible extensions at the bottom of the downspouts so that they can be raised when you cut the grass and lowered back down when finished. Alternatively he may have supplied you with splash pads at the bottom – again these serve the purpose of directing water away from the foundation so leave them in place. If you want to remove them to do landscaping, remember to replace them with flexible extensions. Lastly if your downspouts are damaged or bent or dented replace them as the extent of this damage can slow down the rate at which the water is removed from your roof as it can back up.

In cases of heavier than normal rains the eavestroughs may not be able to manage all the water coming off the roof and some may then splash over the sides – this is not a defect.

OUTSIDE HOSE CONNECTIONS

Remember to disconnect your hose from the outside hose connections in the fall or at any time if temperatures are expected to fall below freezing to ensure the hose connection can completely drain out and not freeze up as this can then split the pipe and cause a major leak inside your home and in severe cases cause water buildup under your floor resulting in serious damage.

Do not disconnect your sump pump under any circumstances and ensure it discharges at all times. Either supply a splash pad under discharge to ensure water is directed away from foundation or direct the water away with a discharge hose of large enough diameter to avoid filling and freezing in cold weather.

WOOD DECKING AND WOOD HANDRAILS

Wood decking and wood handrails bear the full force of the elements – sun, rain and snow. This results in splinters as the wood gets wet and then dries out – over and over. This is a normal occurrence caused by the weather. Painted or stained or sealed wood surfaces can minimize the occurrence of splinters so checking these surfaces regularly for wear and tear and then re-finishing them is good normal maintenance, especially in high traffic areas.

The Exterior...continued

CONCRETE DRIVEWAYS AND SIDEWALKS

Concrete driveways and sidewalks are subject to the full effects of Mother Nature as well and this can result in minor surface cracking and some heaving or settling of these concrete surfaces, all of which is perfectly normal. Remember your driveway was designed to carry the load of the family car or light truck. You will damage your driveway if you allow heavy trucks and equipment to drive on it.

Sometimes the top layer of your concrete surfaces will become pitted or pieces will flake off. The most common causes of this are the freeze/thaw cycles. We strongly recommend, to avoid the chance of your driveway flaking, caused by your vehicle bringing de-icing contaminants onto your driveway from the streets, that you seal your driveway and walkways with a good sealing product available from your local building supply store. Failure to do so could result in the denial of a claim made by you. Follow the manufacturer's instructions completely. The provincial Ready Mixed Concrete Associations state that concrete must be resealed once every three years or sooner if required.

THE ROOF

The roof of your house will give you many years of reliable service, no matter what the roof material is – asphalt shingles, wood shakes, tiles, etc. Following a heavy rain or windstorm it is a good practice to do a routine check for any missing or loose roofing. If there is a problem identified, attend to it as soon as possible as the roof's prime purpose is to keep water out of your home.

You may experience, on a south or west facing roof, especially one that has roof valleys and rapidly changing roof lines, the phenomenon of ice damming. This can be serious as it can result in water eventually getting into your house through the attic.

An ice dam can occur when the snow builds up in these valleys and/or gets trapped between the roof lines. The constant action of the warming sun in the day and the cold nights will cause the snow to melt and freeze and build up along the eaves thus restricting the free flow of the melting snow. This can ultimately force the some melt water into your attic.

It is your responsibility to ensure the snow on your roof does not create the conditions that will cause an ice dam.

The Exterior...continued

SIDING

The siding of your home comes in various types – stucco, vinyl siding, cement board sidings, wood and composite wood. Some of these sidings are painted and the transitions between dissimilar materials will have sealing between them.

Vinyl siding is very popular and very easy to maintain. Simply washing it with a hose and a mild soap should suffice but do not use a power washer as it will force the water behind the siding and can cause damage or even leak into the walls.

Remember when cleaning with a hose always ensure the water is directed downward over all exterior finishes and NEVER upward as that can force the water behind the siding as well and cause damage.

Stucco is another very popular siding application. Maintenance consists of: (a) an annual review to check for gaps that can allow water to penetrate and (b) an annual cleaning with water, a brush and a mild detergent. Gaps are most likely to be found around openings in the home (windows, doors, exhaust and intake piping, hose bibs, etc.). Identified gaps are to be caulked with an appropriate external caulk compound. Minor hairline cracks are to be expected and are considered normal unless the crack width is greater than 1/8". Lastly, do not use a power washer on your stucco as it will severely damage it and rip it off your walls.

An increasingly popular siding is cement board products and they come in the form of panels, planks and even shingles. They are virtually maintenance free; they do need to be cleaned with the hose, a mild cleaner and some elbow grease from time to time – again, no power washers please!

Wood and wood composite products need re-finishing every couple of years or so this being a function in part of which direction they face with the south and west facing side receiving the full weathering impact of the sun, rain and wind driven rain.

The Exterior...continued

EXTERIOR SEALANTS AND CAULKING

You must also annually do a routine check of the exterior caulking placed wherever two different hard surfaces come together (windows and siding, penetrations through the siding for doors, hose bibs, exhaust fans etc.) to ensure it is intact, it has not separated from one of the two adjacent surfaces or is missing altogether. Where the caulking has deteriorated or is missing, replace it as soon as possible with the appropriate sealing product that can be found at any hardware or building supply store.

Seasonal Maintenance Schedule

Establishing and following a maintenance schedule is the best way to protect your investment, to ensure that by doing your maintenance you prevent the appearance of future problems and to manage your household maintenance budget. This seasonal schedule of maintenance tasks should not replace any manufacturer’s recommendations. We suggest that you use licensed contractors for any tasks you may feel you don’t have the technical knowledge or ability to perform.

Following a maintenance schedule is also important to ensure your warranty protections remain fully in place. If you forget or decide not to follow the recommended maintenance procedures of the manufacturer of your home’s equipment or those provided by your builder or these recommendations below, it is possible that any claim you might make for a defect will be denied on the grounds that you did not maintain your home.

Safety First – As a homeowner, you often want to perform maintenance tasks yourself because you can save money! It is important though to bear in mind that there are many areas of home maintenance that are best left to professionals. For example, electrical work, entering an attic, or climbing on roofs and ladders are just a few hazardous activities. It is better to make the safe choice if there is any question as to your ability to perform any maintenance task.

WINTER:

December	
	Clean and/or replace the air filters on your furnace.
	Clean out thoroughly the humidifier attached to your furnace and ensure all the parts in it are in good operating condition for winter. Replace parts as necessary.
	Check your humidistat to ensure it is providing accurate readings of the humidity levels inside your home to guard against damage to your hardwood flooring and other valuable wood products and furnishings.
	Check the CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms – check or replace the batteries.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Shovel the snow from porches and exterior stairs. Don’t use salts or other chemicals that will damage the concrete to melt or get rid of the ice build up.
	When you shovel snow, be sure to place it away from your home.
	Check your roof for snow build up, particularly in any roof valleys. Arrange to have excessive snow removed to prevent the chance of ice dams forming.
	Check/clean your heat recovery ventilator and wash or replace the filter.

January	
	Clean and/or replace the air filters on your furnace.
	Check your humidifier to ensure it continues to work properly.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Shovel the snow from porches and exterior stairs. Don't use salts or other chemicals that will damage the concrete to melt or get rid of the ice build up.
	When you shovel snow, be sure to place it away from your home.
	Check your roof for snow build up, particularly in any roof valleys. Arrange to have excessive snow removed to prevent the chance of ice dams forming.
	Check/clean your heat recovery ventilator and wash or replace the filter.

February	
	Clean and/or replace the air filters on your furnace.
	Check your humidifier to ensure it continues to work properly.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Shovel the snow from porches and exterior stairs. Don't use salts or other chemicals that will damage the concrete to melt or get rid of the ice build up.
	When you shovel snow, be sure to place it away from your home.
	Check your roof for snow build up, particularly in any roof valleys. Arrange to have excessive snow removed to prevent the chance of ice dams forming.
	Check/clean your heat recovery ventilator and wash or replace the filter.

SPRING:

March: It's still winter out here on the prairies!	
	Clean and/or replace the air filters on your furnace.
	Check your humidifier to ensure it continues to work properly.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Shovel the snow from porches and exterior stairs. Don't use salts or other chemicals that will damage the concrete to melt or get rid of the ice build up.
	When you shovel snow, be sure to place it away from your home.
	Check your roof for snow build up, particularly in any roof valleys. Arrange to have excessive snow removed to prevent the chance of ice dams forming.
	Check/clean your heat recovery ventilator and wash or replace the filter.

April

	Clean and/or replace the air filters on your furnace.
	Check your humidifier to ensure it continues to work properly.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Check your downspouts and ensure the snow melt is able to move freely away from your home.
	Check your gutters to ensure they are not blocked with ice or other debris that will stop them from flowing freely.

May

	Check all landscaping and outdoor features to ensure good drainage away from the house and if the ground has settled or water is running back toward the house take immediate measures to ensure flow away from your home.
	Make sure all your drainage systems are working properly and the water drains away from your home. If it does not, take corrective actions immediately.
	If your home has a crawl space under part of it, check it for any water penetration and repair the source of any unintended water.
	Check to ensure there are no insects or vermin getting into your home.
	Inspect caulking around windows for cracks or separation from the window or building.
	Check the roof for any loose shingles, tiles or shakes.
	Make sure all exterior vents are in good condition and not blocked with debris.
	Inspect all caulking inside and especially outside to ensure it is continuous and intact and touch-up or replace where needed with approved products.
	Clean windows, window tracks and make sure weep holes are not blocked (including sliding door tracks – lubricate openers and track rollers with silicone spray.)
	Check and repair any deteriorated or damaged tile grout in bathrooms and kitchens and tiled floors elsewhere to prevent any moisture damage.
	Check the condition of concrete slabs and sidewalks and driveways – repair cracks as necessary.
	Check all screens for tears and repair as needed.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

SUMMER: Enjoy it!

June	
	Make sure your sprinklers and hoses are not directing water against the outside of your house. Sometimes the kids will accidentally direct water that way!
	Check all the vents outside of your home; the combustion vent intake, the dryer vent and the range hood vent, etc. Make sure they are all clear, functional and the screens are clean. Pay attention to the caulking around them and repair as necessary.
	Inspect and lubricate your garage door rollers. Never try to adjust the door springs yourself - always call a skilled tradesperson for this.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	If you have central air conditioning in your home, ensure it is in good working order. You will have to continue to clean and/or replace the furnace filters with central air throughout the summer months.

July and August	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

FALL

September: remember that winter can come early on the prairies so be prepared!	
	Inspect caulking around windows and doors and all other exterior penetrations for cracks or separation from the window or building and repair/replace as needed.
	Check the roof for any loose shingles, tiles or shakes. Repair as needed.
	Make sure all exterior vents are in good condition and not blocked with debris.
	Inspect all caulking inside and especially outside to ensure it is continuous and intact and touch-up or replace where needed with approved products.
	Clean windows, window tracks and make sure weep holes are not blocked (including sliding door tracks – lubricate openers and track rollers with silicone spray.)
	Check and repair any deteriorated or damaged tile grout in bathrooms and kitchens and tiled floors elsewhere to prevent any moisture damage.
	Check all screens for tears and repair as needed.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.

September...continued

	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	If you have large trees or shrubs close to your home, make sure they are trimmed well back to avoid branches damaging the exterior of the home, the shingles or interfering with the operation of your exterior vents.
	Check for leaves and debris in gutters and eavestroughs – check for blockages at the down-pipe connections.
	Remember to turn outside water outlets off and drain exterior faucets of water before winter! There are several kinds of outside water outlets. If you have only the frost-free type of hose bib it shuts off only from the outside of your home. Make sure all hoses and appliances are disconnected to allow water to drain out. You may have a frost-free type that also has an inside water shut-off valve. Shut off the inside valve, then open the outside hose bib to allow it to drain. You may have a non-frost –free type of hose bib with an inside shut-off. Turn of the water at the inside valve and open the outside valve to ensure the water drains. Some new homes have the hose bibs inside the garage or a utility room – these too should have the hoses disconnected and be drained, or have the water supply shut off and drained before freezing temperatures.

October and November

	If you missed doing some of the exterior maintenance items from September do them now before the freeze up comes.
	Disconnect sump pump hose.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Remove debris from gutters, eavestroughs and down-pipes. Hose them out and ensure good drainage flow.
	Check/clean your heat recovery ventilator and wash or replace the filter.