



Home Care Manual

Caring For Your New Home

Your home has been constructed with quality materials and the labor of experienced craftsmen. Prior to our using any material, it must meet our specifications for quality and durability. All work is performed under our supervision to attain the best possible results.

Although quality materials and workmanship have been used in your home, this does not mean that it will be free from care and maintenance. A home, like an automobile, requires care and attention from day one. General homeowner maintenance is essential to providing a lasting quality home.

Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver is proud of the product we built and our aim was to create lasting value. This cannot be achieved unless you, as the Homeowner, properly maintain your home and all of its components. Periodic maintenance is necessary because of a number of factors, such as normal wear and tear, climatic condition, the inherent characteristics of various materials used in your home (such as wood) and normal service required by the mechanical systems. Natural fluctuations in temperature and humidity also impact your home.

Many times a minor adjustment or repair done immediately by you saves you a more serious, time-consuming, and costly repair later. **Note also, that negligence of routine maintenance can void applicable limited warranty coverage on all or part of your home.**

We recognize that it is impossible to anticipate and describe every attention that may be needed for good home care; however, we have covered many important details. The subjects covered include major components of our homes, listed in alphabetical order. Each topic includes suggestions for your use and care. Not all components listed are included in every Habitat home.

Emergency Service

If you experience the following emergencies:

1. ***Gas leak.*** (Leave your house immediately and contact your utility company; if you are an Xcel Energy customer, call 1-800-895-2999).
2. ***Total loss of heat when the outside temperature is below 45 degrees.*** Call the heating company that installed the furnace (phone number listed on thermostat and/or furnace) or another heating company.
3. ***Total loss of electricity.*** This means all power to the entire house. For power failure to one room or outlet, check to see if GFCI's or breakers are tripped. Otherwise, check with your utility company (if you are an Xcel Energy customer, call 1-800-895-1999), or call an electrician.
4. ***Plumbing leak that requires the entire water supply be shut off.*** Shutoff the water and call a plumber.
5. ***Total loss of water.*** (Check with your water department to be certain the problem is not a general outage in the area).

Appliances (range, fridge, washer, dryer, water heater)

The manufacturers of kitchen and laundry appliances will work directly with you if any repairs are needed for those products. Be prepared to provide the model and serial number of the item and the closing date on your home. Appliance warranties are generally for one year; refer to the literature provided by the manufacturer for complete information. **Warranties for appliances are not available through Habitat.** All appliance warranties are assigned to you at the closing. The appliances are warranted directly to you in accordance with the terms and conditions of the written warranties supplied by the manufacturers.

Mail warranty registration cards directly to the manufacturer. Failure to do this may result in negation of your warranty.

If a problem arises with an appliance, call the customer service number listed in the manufacturer's warranty. When reporting warranty items to the appliance manufacturer, be prepared to supply the following:

1. The date of purchase (closing);
2. The serial and model numbers (found on a metal plate on side or bottom of each appliance);
3. A description of the problem.

Use and Care

Read and follow all manufacturer requirements for each appliance in your home. Some recommendations from Habitat include:

Clothes Washer and Dryer

Your front-loading washing machine requires special detergents. Carefully follow the manufacturer's directions for using it. Once you close the door and turn the washer on, the door will lock automatically and can't be opened until the washing cycle is complete. The shut-off valves are located behind the machine. Be sure to clean the filter for the dryer after each use.

Electric Stove

Turn off burners and oven when not in use. Do not use the oven in place of the furnace to heat your home. A clean stove and oven will work more efficiently and give you many years of carefree performance. Turn off the breaker before replacing switches or heating elements.

Gas Stove

Turn on the exhaust hood before turning on the stove or oven to vent any gas fumes. Turn off burners and oven when not in use. Do not use the oven in place of the furnace to heat your home. A clean stove and oven will work more efficiently and give you many years of carefree performance. Turn off the breaker before replacing switches or heating elements.

Range Hood

Most of the time, the exhaust hood will only require you to clean the surfaces and replace or clean the filter.

Garbage Disposal

Use the disposal to grind soft kitchen scraps ONLY. The unit is attached to the underside of the sink at one of the drain openings and is plugged into an electrical outlet under the sink. Never put your hand into the garbage disposal, especially when it is running.

Refrigerator

To help maintain efficient operation, vacuum/dust the evaporator coil located behind or underneath the fridge at least once a year.

Water Heater (tank-less or “on-demand”)

This appliance heats water as you use it. Hot water for your home is heated by natural gas and distributed to your faucets/shower. 120 degrees is the default setting when you move in your home. Increasing this temperature can be dangerous for small children. In order for the water heater to work efficiently and last as long as possible, it needs to be flushed once per year by an appliance repair person. The water heater creates some water while operating that drains through a plastic hose into the drain in the floor. Make sure the drain hose stays in the drain in the floor.



Tank-less Water Heater

The Rinnai water heaters have warranties from the manufacturer for 1 year on labor, 5 years on parts, and 12 years for the heat exchanger. Please refer to your manual for more information.

Attic Access

The attic space is not intended for storage. Access is provided for purposes of maintaining mechanical equipment that may be located in the attic. When performing any needed task in the attic, caution should be used to not step off wood members onto the drywall. This can result in personal injury and/or damage to the ceiling below.

Brick

After several years, face brick may require “tuck-pointing” (repairing the mortar between the bricks). Otherwise, no regular maintenance is required.

Cabinets

Products such as lemon oil, Liquid Gold, and Old English Furniture Polish and Scratch Cover are suggested for caring for wood finish cabinets. Follow container directions; do not use more than once a month to protect against excessive buildup. Avoid paraffin-based spray or washing cabinets with water, as both will damage the luster of the finish.

If hinges catch, or drawer glides become sluggish, a small amount of lubricant will improve their action.

Door height can be adjusted by loosening the screws that attach the hinge to the door, and then tightening the screws once desired position is achieved.

Caulking

Time and weather will shrink caulking and dry it out so that it no longer provides a good seal against moisture and air infiltration. As a matter of routine maintenance, it is wise to check the caulking and make repairs as needed. Caulking compounds and dispenser guns are available at hardware stores. Read the label to make sure the product that you are buying suits the purpose that you hope to use it for.

Silicone Caulk

Caulking that contains silicone will not accept paint but works well where water is present (for example, where the tub meets wall or sink meets countertop).

Latex Caulk

Latex caulking is appropriate for an area that requires painting (along the stair stringer or where trim meets the wall).

Concrete

Foundation

The foundation of your home had been designed and installed in accordance with the recommendations of our consulting engineer. The walls of the foundation are poured concrete with steel reinforcing rods. Even though the foundation has been designed by an engineer and constructed in accordance with engineering requirements, cracks can still develop in the wall. If a crack develops in a foundation wall that allows water to come through, follow the procedures for submitting a warranty claim.

Flatwork

To properly care for your exterior flatwork concrete (i.e. sidewalks, driveways) do not use salt or chemical ice melters. Do not allow downspouts to drain in such a way that the water will get under the concrete. Seal any cracks in control joints or surface areas immediately with special concrete caulking. Check your local hardware store. They even sell types that are self-leveling. Unfinished landscape at patios or stoops can cause extreme settling conditions and damage to concrete.

Cracks

Some cracking in concrete occurs in almost all homes. The warranty does not cover aesthetic concrete cracks. Concrete will not be replaced due to cracking. By maintaining good drainage away from your home, you are protecting both your home's foundation and the crawl-space floor slab. Maintenance of drainage away from all concrete slabs will minimize cracking and other forms of movement. Cracks in slabs should be sealed with a waterproof concrete caulk to prevent moisture from penetrating to the soil beneath.

Cracking in the concrete flatwork is often caused by extreme cold. During the summer, moisture finds its way under the concrete along the edges, or through cracks in the surface. In winter, this moisture forms frost that can lift the concrete, increasing or causing more cracking.

Expansion Joints

Expansion joints look like strips of felt and go between two surfaces of concrete. The purpose is to help control the expansion of the concrete material itself. Concrete is also susceptible to shrinking. If the concrete shrinks, moisture can penetrate under the concrete and lift the expansion joint. If this occurs, you can fill the gap with a concrete caulk.

Ice, Snow and Chemicals

Remove ice and snow from concrete slabs as promptly as possible after snowstorms. Protect concrete from abuse by chemical agents such as pet urine, fertilizers, automotive fluids, repeated washing, or de-icing agents, such as road salt that can drip from vehicles. All of these items can harm the surface of the concrete. If you want to put something down to help with slippery, icy conditions, use sand.

Cleaning

Do not wash patios, porches, driveways, etc. with cold water from an outside faucet when temperatures are extremely high and the hot sun has been shining on the concrete. The abrupt change in temperature

can damage the surface bond of the concrete. Sweeping is the recommended method of keeping exterior concrete clean. If washing is necessary, do this when temperatures are moderate.

Cleaning of the garage floor by hosing can cause settling, spalling, and increase soil movement by allowing water to penetrate any existing cracks. Sweeping is the recommended method for keeping the garage floor clean.

Heavy Vehicles

Do not permit heavy vehicles such as moving vans or concrete trucks to drive on your concrete work. This concrete is not intended to bear the weight of this type of vehicle.

Condensation

Condensation on interior surfaces of the windows and frames is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures, and/or inadequate ventilation. These conditions are significantly influenced by family lifestyle. If your home includes a humidifier, closely observe manufacturer's directions, especially during periods of cooler temperatures. Habitat will not be responsible for damaged resulting from the use of humidifiers.

Countertops

Always use a cutting board when cutting, chopping, etc. Protect the counter from heat and extremely hot pans; if the pot is too hot to touch, don't put it on the counter. Do not use countertops as ironing boards and keep cigarettes in an ashtray.

Cleaners

Avoid abrasive cleaners that will damage the luster of the surface.

Dish Drying Mats

Rubber drain mats can trap moisture beneath them causing the laminated plastic to warp and blister. Dry the surface as needed.

Wax

Wax is not necessary, but can be used to make counters gleam.

Caulking

The caulking around the edge of your countertops and between the countertops and the sink may shrink, leaving a slight gap. Refer to "Caulking" for maintenance hints for this condition.

Crawl Space

The crawl space is not intended for storage. Slight dampness may be experienced in the crawl space. Standing water should be reported to Habitat for inspection. (See also, “Vents”)

Fan

There is a fan in your crawl space that should be kept running at all times. It vents the crawl space and provides fresh air to the house. Please do not adjust the power level for the fan after Habitat has done so.



Crawl space fan.

Doors/Locks

The doors installed in your home are of high quality, but they are wood products and subject to the natural characteristics of wood such as shrinkage and warpage. Due to humidity changes and the use of forced air furnaces, showers, and dishwashers, etc., interior doors may require minor adjustments. Putty, filler, or latex caulk can be used to fill any minor separations that may develop at mitered joints in door trim.

Warping

In the event a door warps, keep it latched as much as possible and it often will return to normal.

Sticking

The most common cause of a sticking door is the natural expansion of lumber due to changes in humidity. When sticking is due to swelling during a damp season, do not make any changes or adjustments to the door unless it continues to stick after the weather changes. Use sandpaper to smooth the door. Be certain to repaint the area of the door where it was sanded to seal against moisture.

Before cutting/planing a door due to sticking, there are two steps to try. First, apply either a paste wax, light coat of paraffin, or candle wax to the sticking surface. Second, tighten the screws that hold the doorjamb or doorframe.

Hinges

Removing the hinge pin and rubbing a lead pencil or graphite lubricant on it can remedy a squeaky door hinge. Do not use oil as it can gum up.

Failure to Latch

If a door will not latch due to minor settling, you can correct this by making a new opening in the jamb for the latch plate and raising or lowering the plate accordingly.

Bi-fold Doors

Interior bi-fold doors will sometimes stick or warp due to weather conditions. Applying a silicone lubricant to the tracks can minimize this inconvenience.

Slamming

Slamming doors can damage both doors and jambs, and can even cause cracking in walls. Hanging on the doorknob can work the hardware loose and cause the door to sag.

Locks

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

Keys

Keep a duplicate “privacy lock” key where children cannot reach it in the event someone locks themselves in a room. The top edge of the door casing is often used as a place to keep the key. Some types of privacy locks can be opened with a small screwdriver or similarly shaped device.

Exterior Finish

To insure longer life for your exterior doors, it is recommended that you refinish them annually with a white or light colored paint.

Weather Strip

Weather stripping and/or any threshold supplied with exterior doors will occasionally require adjustment or replacement.

Drywall

Slight cracking, screw “pops” and/or seams may become visible in walls and ceilings. These occurrences are caused by the shrinkage of the wood and normal deflection of rafters to which the drywall is attached.

Repairs

Most drywall repairs can easily be made. To correct a screw pop, reset the screw with a screwdriver. Cover it with spackle (available at paint and hardware stores). Apply two or three thin coats. When dry, sand the surface with fine grain sandpaper before painting. Indentations caused by sharp objects can be filled with spackle in the same manner. Hairline cracks can be repaired with a coat of paint; slightly larger cracks can be repaired with spackle or caulk.

Electrical

The main electrical panel for your home control panel includes a main shutoff that controls all the electrical power to the home. In addition, individual breakers control the separate circuits. Be certain you are familiar with the location of the master control panel.



Electrical panel.

Each breaker is marked to help you identify which breaker is connected to major appliances, lights, outlets, or other service. Should a failure occur in any part of your home, always check the breakers in the main panel box before calling for warranty service.

Each GFCI receptacle has a test and reset button. Once each month the test button should be pressed. This will trip the circuit. To return service, press the reset button. If a GFCI breaker trips during normal use it may be an indication of a faulty appliance and some investigation is in order. An important point to remember is that one GFCI breaker can control up to three or four outlets. (If a receptacle isn't working, check to see if one of the nearby GFCIs is tripped.)



GFCI outlet.

Unused Outlets

If there are small children in the home, install safety plugs to cover unused baseboard outlets. This also minimizes air infiltration that can sometimes occur with these outlets. Teach children never to touch electrical outlets, sockets, or fixtures.

Buzzing

Fluorescent fixtures use transformer action to operate them. This action sometimes causes a buzzing sound and is a normal condition.

Exhaust Fans

The ceiling exhaust fan is used to remove unpleasant odors or moisture from a room. They are located in the bathrooms and laundry room and are controlled by a wall switch. Newer fans are often barely audible so check closely before calling for service. **Always use your exhaust fans when showering so that the moisture can be exhausted to the exterior of your house. If you do not use the fans, condensation can collect in the duct work and drip back down. This is not a roof leak.**

Underground Cables

Check the location of buried service leads as required by law, by calling the local utility locating service before digging or moving large amounts of sod. Care should be taken to keep soil around the foundation from settling to protect this service; avoid large amounts of water at this point as well.

Call before you dig- 811 or (800) 922-1987

Modifications

Do not tamper with or add to your electrical system. For any modification that is needed, contact a licensed electrician.

Expansion and Contraction

All building materials are subject to expansion and contraction caused by changes in temperature and humidity. Dissimilar materials expand or contract at different rates. This results in separation between materials, particularly dissimilar ones. The effects can be seen in small cracks in drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners, etc.

This can be alarming to a uniformed Homeowner but, in fact, it is normal. Shrinkage of the wood members of your home is inevitable. This will occur in your home. It will be most noticeable during the first year, but may continue beyond that time. In most cases, paint and caulking are all that is needed to conceal this minor evidence of a natural phenomenon. Properly installed caulking will shrink and must be maintained by the Homeowner.

Flooring:

Carpet

Vacuuming high traffic areas daily will not only keep them clean but will help to maintain the upright position of the nap. Spills should be wiped up and stains spot cleaned immediately. Always dab at the stain, never rub it. Stain removers should be tested first on an out of the way area of the carpet, such as in a closet, to check for any undesirable effects. Professional or steam cleaning should be performed regularly, usually annually.

Tile

You should vacuum or sweep your ceramic tile floors regularly, e.g. once a week. You should also damp mop them regularly with the manufacturer's recommended tile and grout cleaner, or with a water and soap-less detergent mixture/household cleaner. Grout is susceptible to mold and mildew and is easy to stain. Consequently you need to be vigilant in regards to cleaning it. Hot water and household bleach works well for food spills, blood, and inks/dyes (e.g. juices, coffee, tea, food, leaking pen, new dark wet clothes). Apply it with a small soft brush to the stained grout lines.

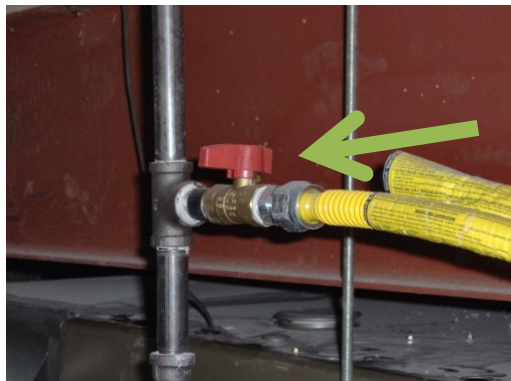
To remove mold and mildew, use Ammonia, with equal parts water, and a small soft brush.

Individual tiles may crack over time due to settling of the house. Habitat will leave you extra tiles so that you can remove and replace cracked tiles as needed.

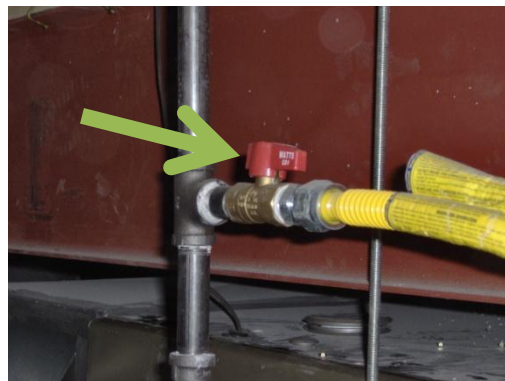
Grout should be resealed yearly or as recommended by the product manufacturer of the product the homeowner chooses to use.

Gas Shutoffs

There is a shutoff on the gas line at or near its connection to each item that operates on gas (dryer, furnace, hot water heater, range maybe). In addition, there is a main shutoff at the meter. These are pointed out during the Homeowner Walk through. **If you suspect a gas leak, leave the home immediately and use a neighbors phone to call the gas company for emergency service. Do not use your telephone, turn on/off any switches/appliances.**



Gas in OFF position



Gas in ON position

Grading and Drainage

The final soil level around your home has been inspected and approved for proper drainage of your lot, and a surveyor does a drainage certification. The local building authorities as well as our construction superintendent make inspections. Typically, the grade around your home should slope one inch in the first ten feet away from your home, tapering to a 2% slope.

Positive Drainage

It is essential that you maintain the slopes around your home to permit the water to drain away from the home as rapidly as possible. Failure to do so can result in major structural damage and will void your warranty.

During construction, it is necessary to excavate an area larger than the foundation of your home. In addition, some trenching is necessary for installation of utility lines. Although the soil is replaced and re-compacted it does not return to its original density. Some settling will occur, especially after prolonged heavy rainfall or melting of considerable amounts of snow. This can continue to occur for the first few years you are in your home, depending on the amount of precipitation that occurs and other factors.

Inspect the perimeter of your home regularly for signs of settling.

Roof runoff

Do not remove the splash blocks and/or downspout extensions from under the downspouts. Keep these in place at all times, sloped so the water drains away from your home quickly.

Gutters and Downspouts

Gutters must be checked every spring and fall and cleared of leaves or other debris. Materials that accumulate in gutters can slow the process of draining water from the roof, cause overflows, or clog the downspouts and lead to problems such as a leaking roof. Excess snow should be cleaned away from downspouts as soon as possible to allow the gutter to drain and prevent damage.

Ladders

Use caution when leaning ladders against gutters as this may cause dents.

Leaks

If a joint between sections of gutter drips, caulk the inside joint using a gutter caulking compound available at hardware stores.

Overflow

Gutters may overflow during periods of excessively heavy rain. It is expected that small amounts of water, but not exceeding ½" in depth, will stand for short periods of time in gutters immediately after rain. No correction is required for these conditions. Owner must keep the gutters from obstruction.

Downspouts

Downspouts are placed to carry water to the ground and in extensions, which then direct the flow away from the foundation of your home. These extensions are for the protection of the foundation; the Homeowner is responsible for maintaining them. **Extensions should extend outside of the rock or mulch beds so that water is not dammed behind the edging materials that might be used.**



This is the ***downspout extension***. Keep it in this position so roof water drains away from the house.

Heating System

The heating system installed in your home will provide you with many years of comfort if given proper care and maintenance.



Furnace

Thermostat

A programmable thermostat was chosen for your home to help maintain a comfortable temperature and reduce heating bills. It can be set to automatically adjust to your specific heating requirements. The thermostat contains back-up batteries, which will keep your settings in case of an electrical power failure. These should be replaced each year in the fall. Operation instructions are on the back of the thermostat cover and in the manufacturer's manual. Please read and follow the instructions to cut your heating costs by 5-25%.



Thermostat

Condensate Pump

A pump is used to remove water that is produced by the furnace and is plugged into a GFCI outlet located next to the furnace. Check monthly to be sure its internal circuit breaker hasn't tripped. If the pump fails to come on, the furnace will not operate. Usually if the pump fails, you will see water on the crawl space floor under your furnace. Check the GFCI at the pump if the furnace isn't working.



*This is the **condensate pump** located near the furnace.*

Annual Maintenance

Your heating installer recommends that you have your furnace cleaned and serviced once per year by a licensed heating company. Good maintenance of the furnace can save energy dollars as well as prolong the life of the furnace itself. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's literature on use and care. The guidelines here include only general information.

Troubleshooting

If your furnace is not working, there are a few things you can check. First, the furnace has an on/off power switch. This switch looks like a regular light switch. It is located in a metal box outside the furnace. This switch simply overrides all furnace commands and manually shuts down the blower. You can use this switch as a reset to try and start the furnace if it is not working.



Furnace on/off.

Next, check to make sure that the condensate pump is plugged in and working. Pour some water into the pump (where the small hose attaches) until the box is full. The pump should turn on once it is filled. If not, make sure it is plugged in and try resetting the GFCI outlet.

Then, make sure your thermostat is set to a temperature higher than the current temperature of your house.

Check to make sure that your furnace filter has been changed.

Your furnace has an LED code system to troubleshoot why it is not working. Open/remove the door panel on the furnace and look for a red LED light. If the furnace is functioning properly, the light will be solid. When there is a problem, the light blinks a code which corresponds to what is wrong. The code list will either be on the back of the door, or in the booklet that came with the furnace.

If you can't get your furnace to work after trying these things, call Family Services to start the warranty process.

Filter

Remember to change the filter monthly during the heating season. A clogged filter can slow airflow and cause cold spots in your home. Although it takes less than one minute to change the filter, this is one of the most overlooked details of normal furnace care. Buy filters in large quantity for the sake of convenience. A dirty filter can increase heating costs by 5-25% and can result in hundreds of dollars of repair to your furnace.

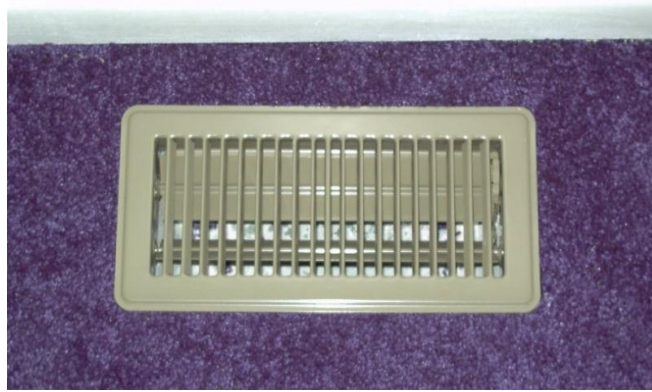


This is the cold-air return. The filter installs behind this cover.

Adjust Heat Vents

Experiment with the adjustable registers in your home to establish the best heat flow for your lifestyle. Generally, heat can be decreased in seldom used or interior rooms. This is a very individual matter and you will need to balance the system for your family.

Your house also has 3 or 4 vents that do not blow warm air. They are NOT connected to the furnace, but MUST BE KEPT OPEN.



Adjustable heat vent.

Return Air Vents

For maximum comfort and efficient energy use, place furniture and draperies to allow unobstructed airflow from registers and cold air returns.

Trial Run

Have a trial run early in the fall to test the furnace. If service is needed, it is much better to discover this prior to the heating season.

Temperature

Normal temperature variations from floor to floor (depending on the style of home) can be as much as 10 degrees or more on extremely cold days. The furnace blower will typically cycle on and off more frequently and for shorter periods of time during severe cold spells.

Overheating

Your new home should not be overheated. Overheating can cause excessive shrinkage in framing lumber and may damage the home. In the beginning, use as little heat as possible and increase it gradually.

Odor

It is normal for the heating system to emit odors for a few minutes when it is first turned on after an extended period of not being used. This is caused by dust that has settled in the ducts and should pass very quickly.

Gas

If you smell gas in the house, have everyone leave immediately and meet at a pre-determined place outside the home. Do not use matches or any type of open flame in an attempt to re-light any appliance as it may cause an explosion. Call the gas company from outside the home. Turn off the gas meter at the shut-off valve only if you can do so safely.

Furnace Sounds

Expansion or contraction of metal ductwork will typically result in some ticking or popping sounds. **This is a normal condition and it is not possible to eliminate these sounds.**

Ductwork

The heat system is a sealed system and the ductwork should remain attached and securely fastened.

Insulation (blown attic)

The effectiveness of blown insulation (in the attic) is diminished if it is uneven. The last step in any work done in your attic should be to check that the insulation lays smooth and even.

Landscaping

Sod

When sod is installed, it needs a lot of water every day until the grass roots get established (about 4-6 weeks). Habitat staff or volunteers will help educate you as to how much and how often to water. Stay off the lawn as much as possible during this time. After the grass starts to grow, begin a regular schedule of cutting and fertilizing. Carefully follow manufacturer's directions for fertilizing and spraying. Do not remove more than 1/3 of the grass height with each mowing. Cutting more than this may harm your lawn.

Shrub and Trees

The plants around your home will need regularly scheduled fertilizing, watering, and pruning. Check the tags on the plants for more information. Also see Landscaping Manual you received at the Landscaping Workshop.

Drainage

The necessary grades have been established by Habitat to ensure proper drainage away from the house. Standing water shall not remain for extended periods of time in the immediate area of the house after a rain shower (generally, no more than 24 hours) except in swales that drain other areas. In these areas, a longer period can be anticipated (generally, no more than 48 hours). The homeowner should anticipate the possibility of standing water after an unusually heavy rainfall.

Sprinkler Systems

Your house may or may not have a sprinkler system to water plants and trees, depending on where your house is built. **If it does, your sprinkler system needs to be blown out in the fall, BEFORE THE FIRST FREEZE, by a sprinkler professional.** This costs a little money each year but ensures that you don't have to pay for much more costly repairs if it freezes and breaks. The company that does the blow-outs, usually turns your system on for you the following spring.

You are also provided with a timer control box that operates your sprinkler system. This is used to determine how many days/week and how many minutes your system runs. You will be provided with training on how to use this timer control by a Habitat staff member or volunteer after you move-in. There is also a manual that explains the different settings.



This is what the *timer control box* may look like. It is usually in the garage or utility room.

Mirrors

To clean your mirrors use any reliable liquid glass cleaner or polisher available at most hardware or grocery stores. Avoid splashing water under the mirror. The moisture will cause the silvering to deteriorate.

Paint and Stain

The interior woodwork, as well as the bathrooms and kitchen walls have been painted with latex paint. These areas may be wiped down with a soft sponge and soapy water. Spackle may be used to cover any small defects prior to paint touch-up. .

Touch-ups

Homeowners will receive a sample of interior and exterior paint used on their homes. This paint should be stored so as not to be affected by freezing temperatures. When doing touch-up painting, use a small brush, applying paint only to the damaged spot. The paint may not match the surrounding area exactly, even if the same paint mix is used. When it is time to repaint a room, prepare the wall surfaces first by cleaning with a mild soap and water mixture or a cleaning product that is recommended by the manufacturer.

Wall Cracks

Do not attempt to fix drywall cracks or other separations due to shrinkage until after the first heating season. See “Drywall” for additional information concerning repairs.

Exterior

Regular painting and repair will preserve the beauty of and add value to your home. Check the painted/stained surfaces of your home’s exterior annually. If you repaint before there is much chipping or wearing away of the original finish, you will save the cost of extensive surface preparation. It is a wise

maintenance policy to plan on refinishing the exterior surface of your home approximately every three years. The aging of the exterior is governed by the climatic conditions. Over a period of time, this finish will fade and dull a bit.

Maintenance

When you wish to repaint and/or stain the exterior on your home, popped nails should be reset; the blistered or peeling portions should be wire-brushed or scraped with a putty knife, sanded, and spotted with primer. Then the entire area can be painted and/or stained. Be certain to apply a top quality exterior paint that has been formulated for local climate conditions. Do not allow water to spray on the exterior walls of your home. This will cause blistering, peeling, splintering, and other damage to the home. Trim painted white or light colors will more readily show grain and cracks and therefore requires additional maintenance.

Severe Weather

Hail and wind can cause a great deal of damage in a severe storm and the house should be inspected after such weather. Damage caused by severe weather should be reported to your insurance company promptly.

Phone Jacks

Use and Care

Each home is equipped with telephone jacks. Initiating phone service is the Homeowner's responsibility. Moving outlets for decorating purposes or convenience is an owner expense.

Plumbing

Your main water shutoff is located in your crawl space near the street. It is important to know and remember the location of the shutoff for emergencies such as a water line freeze or break.

Freezing Pipes

Provided the home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze at temperatures above 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Heat should be set at 55 degrees if you will be away for an extended period of time; and it is best to drain your water supply lines. This is done by shutting off the main supply line and opening the faucets to relieve the pressure in the lines

Debris in Pipes

Even though your plumbing lines have been flushed out to remove dirt and foreign matter, there are usually small amounts of minerals that enter the line. Aerators on the faucets strain much of this from your water. However, debris caught in these aerators may cause the faucets to drip because washers wear more rapidly when they come in contact with foreign matter.

Care and Cleaning

Follow manufacturer's directions for cleaning fixtures. Abrasive cleansers will remove the smooth finish leaving behind a porous surface that is difficult to maintain. A non-abrasive cleaner or liquid detergent is usually recommended.

Stainless Steel

Stainless steel sinks should be cleaned with soap and water to preserve their luster. Do not use abrasive cleaners; they will damage the finish. An occasional cleaning with a good stainless steel cleaner will enhance the finish. Care should be taken to avoid leaving produce on a stainless steel surface since prolonged contact with produce can stain the finish.

Synthetic Countertops

You should not use abrasive cleanser or razor blades on countertops since both will cause certain damage to the surface.

Fixtures

Clean plumbing fixtures with a soft sponge and soapy water, then polish with a dry cloth. Drying with a soft cloth or towel will prevent water spots.

Toilet Tank Care

Avoid exposing the toilet to blows from sharp or heavy objects; this can cause chipping or cracking. Avoid abnormal pressures against the sides of the tank. It is possible to crack the tank at the points where it is attached to the bowl.

Dripping Faucet

A dripping faucet may be repaired by shutting off the water at the valve directly under the sink. Then, remove the faucet stem, change the washer, and reinstall the faucet stem. The showerhead is repaired the same way. It is important to replace the washer with another of the same type and size. Remembering not to turn the faucets off with excessive force can minimize the frequency of this repair.

Low Pressure

It will occasionally be necessary to remove and clean the aerators on faucets to allow proper flow of water, normally every three to four months is sufficient. You can do it more often if you notice a pressure reduction.

Leaks

If a major plumbing leak occurs the first step is to turn off the supply of water to the area involved. This may mean shutting off the water to the entire house. Then contact a plumber.



Water valve in “on” position



Water valve in “off” position

Running Toilet

To stop running water, check the shutoff float in the tank. You will most likely find it has lifted too high in the tank, preventing the valve from shutting off completely. In this case, there is usually a screw that you can turn to adjust the float. Turn the screw a little bit and flush the toilet to see if it has improved. Use trial and error to figure out how to get the screw adjusted properly.

Clogs

Many plumbing clogs are caused by improper garbage disposal use. Always use plenty of cold water when running the disposal. **Do not put grease down the disposal.** Allow the water to run a minimum of 15 seconds after shutting off the disposal.

Clogged toilets can usually be cleared with a plunger. If you use chemical agents, follow directions carefully to avoid injury or damage to you or the fixtures.

Outside Faucets

Turn the faucet off until water drains out the back of the spigot. This feature keeps this faucet from freezing. **Remove any hoses as soon as the outside temperature falls below 35 degrees.** The water left in a hose can freeze; expand back into the pipe, causing a break in the line. Repair of a broken line to an exterior faucet is not covered by warranty.

Noise

Changes in temperature or the flow of the water itself will cause some noise in the pipes. This is normal and requires no repair. Temperature variations can be expected if water is being used in more than one location in the home.

Roof

The shingles on your roof do not require any treatment or sealer. Never attempt to walk on the roof of your home as you can easily damage the shingles which can in turn result in leakage.. If, for any reason, you need to walk on the roof, take great care to avoid falls, coming in contact with overhead power lines, or damaging the flashing, vent stacks, flues or ventilators.

Severe Weather

After severe storms, a visual inspection of the roof for damages is called for. Notify your homeowner insurance company if damage is noted.

Leaks

When a leak is noticed try to detect the exact location; this will greatly simplify locating the area that requires repair when the roof is dry.

Ice Buildup

Ice buildup may develop in the eaves during extended periods of cold and snow. Damage that results from this is normally covered by the Homeowner insurance and is not a warranty item.

Siding

We use different materials for the exterior siding of the house. Your house may be sided with brick, stucco, LP smart siding, or some combination thereof. Do not use abrasive cleaners for any of the siding materials. Try mild soap and water if cleaning is necessary.

See “Paint”.

Smoke Detectors

Each smoke detector is permanently wired to the house electrical system and has back up batteries to operate the unit in case of electrical power failure. Read the manual from the manufacturer for information on the care of smoke detectors.

Cleaning and Batteries

Once every 3 months smoke alarms should be cleaned (vacuumed) to prevent a false alarm or lack of response in a fire. After cleaning, push the button to test; the alarm should sound. For your safety, it is important that these devices be kept clean and in good operating condition.

Batteries should be changed every 6 months. Be sure to use only new, unused batteries of the same type as originally installed. After installing the new battery, push the button to test; alarm should sound.

Stairs

There is no known method of installation that will prevent vibration in a staircase when used by adults. Often there will be a slight shrinkage where the stairs meet the wall. When this occurs, a thin bead of latex caulk can be applied and when dry, painted to match the wall

See also: Caulking, Framing

Sump Pit

The sump pit is in the crawl space and is connected to the underground foundation drains. If there is too much groundwater (from rain, for example) for the ground to absorb, it will travel down to the drain and into the sump pit. It is meant to hold water and then it evaporates or travels back into the ground. It would be very rare for this to fill up, but if it does, the water would need to be pumped out of the pit.

There is a cover on top of the pit, which is basically just a hole. This hole is potentially dangerous to children who may wander into the crawl space. Please keep it covered and consider taping it shut or blocking it off.



Sump pit covered



Sump pit uncovered

Vents

Attic ventilation through the roof or siding is required by building codes and therefore cannot be obstructed.

Occasionally, depending on the force and direction of the wind, rain or snow will infiltrate through these vents causing spotting on the ceiling. Habitat is not responsible for such weather damage and will not make repairs in these instances.

Waterproofing

Your exterior crawl space foundation walls have been coated with a sprayed on asphalt waterproofing material. A French drain has been installed below the footer. There may be a sump pit located in the crawl space. While every effort has been made to eliminate any seepage, during times of excessive moisture some dampness may be noticed. Over time, natural compaction of soils in the backfill areas will usually eliminate this. Careful maintenance of positive drainage will also protect your crawl space from this condition.

Windows, Screens, and Patio Doors

In heavy rains water may collect in the bottom channel of window frames. Weep holes are provided to allow excess water to escape to the outside. Keep the bottom window channels and weep holes free of dirt and debris for proper operation.

Cleaning

Once a month, clean aluminum and vinyl surfaces with warm, clear water. Do not use any powdered cleaner. After each cleaning, apply a silicone lubricant.

Ventilation

Proper ventilation will prevent excessive moisture from forming on the inside of the windows. This helps reduce cleaning chores considerably.

Condensation

Condensation on interior surfaces of the window and frame is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures. The humidity level within the home is largely influenced and controlled by your family's lifestyle.

Storing Screens

Many Homeowners prefer to remove and store screens for the winter to allow more light into the home. Use caution in removing screens. They are easily perforated and the frames bend if not handled with care.

Sticking Windows

Most sliding windows (both vertical and horizontal) are designed for a ten-pound pull. If sticking occurs or excessive pressure is required to open or close, a silicone lubricant should be applied. This is available at hardware stores. Do not use a petroleum-based material.

Window Locks

Acquaint yourself with the operation of the window hardware for maximum security.

Broken Glass

If any panes of glass become broken you should contact a glass company for reglazing. Glass is very difficult to install without special tools. Habitat is not responsible for broken windows after occupancy unless they were noted on the Walk through list.

Condensation

Condensation on interior surfaces of the window and frame is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures. The humidity level within the home is controlled by the Homeowner and requires no corrective action by Habitat.

Homeowners with humidifiers should closely observe manufacturer's directions, especially during extremely cold periods.

Infiltration

Some air and dust will infiltrate around windows, especially prior to the installation of landscaping in the general area.

Tinting or Solar Coatings

Installation of these films will void the window glass warranty because they increase the heat buildup in the thermo-pane space. Homeowners should request a glass warranty from the company installing the film.