



Home Care & Maintenance Manual

Listing of Home Care Options & Tips for Your New Home

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW HOME

This Maintenance guideline is here to provide you with basic information needed to care for and maintain your new home and to prepare you for the minor adjustments and maintenance necessary in most new homes.

Cornerstone Homes is providing you with this for helpful general homeowner maintenance tips. **For Warranty Matters, you will need to refer to the limited warranty booklet that has been provided to you.** Homeowner maintenance items are not covered under your warranty. All items in this may not pertain to your home. The more maintenance and care you give your home, the longer its components will last.

The importance of maintaining your home on a regular basis is directly comparable to maintaining a brand new car. If you never change the oil or get the car tuned up, little problems will eventually become big problems.

Many homeowners unfortunately spend less time and money maintaining their home than most lesser-valued possessions. In addition, your new home is designed and built to last for many years and yet it has numerous components and equipment that require periodic maintenance. By implementing the following preventative maintenance guidelines, you can help keep the components of your home functioning properly with as few problems as possible.

To help you pinpoint when specific maintenance items should be performed, these checklists are divided into distinct time periods. After Move-In, Every Month, Every Six Months, and Annually. For additional information regarding the subjects presented here, please refer to the appropriate Manufacturer's Operating Instructions where applicable.

Disclaimer: This manual is to be used solely as a guide. All information should be verified by the manufacturers, their manuals, or professional subcontractors. Cornerstone Homes does not warrant or guarantee any of the information presented in this manual. It has been obtained and compiled from leading sources on the internet and put into this form for your benefit.

AFTER MOVE-IN CHECKLIST

BATHROOMS

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

ELECTRICAL

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

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

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

FIRST AID KIT

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

FLOORING

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

HOUSEHOLD TOOLS

- Acquire basic tools to help you with normal home maintenance chores including: pliers, regular adjustable wrench, large adjustable wrench (for emergency gas shut-off), flat-blade and Phillips head screwdrivers, claw hammer, tape measure, caulk and caulking gun, putty knife, paint roller and brush, power drill and drill bits, assorted nails, brads, screws, nuts, bolts, sandpaper, utility knife, toilet plunger, gloves, ladder, flashlight and batteries.

LANDSCAPE

- Review and implement recommendations in the *Landscaping Section* and the *Grading and Drainage Section* of this guide.

PLUMBING

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

NATURAL GAS

- Locate and label the main gas line shut-off valve at the exterior of the home and all individual valves and show all family members how to close them in case of a gas leak.

EVERY MONTH CHECK LIST

HEATING

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

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- Check fire extinguishers to ensure that they are fully charged.

GARBAGE DISPOSAL

- Clean disposal blades by grinding up ice cubes. Freshen it with baking soda and by grinding up citrus fruit rinds. *Do not use melon rinds!*

INTERIOR CAULKING

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

RANGE HOOD FAN

- Clean or replace dirty filter.

SMOKE DETECTORS

- Test smoke detectors.
- Clean and/or vacuum detector openings as necessary.
- When one battery beeps (indicating a new one is needed) replace the batteries in every smoke detector in the entire home.

EVERY SIX MONTHS CHECK LIST

CABINETS

- Check screws on cabinet hardware and tighten as necessary. (Hinges, knobs, etc.)

DOORS

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

ELECTRICAL

- Test and reset all GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) receptacles.
- Check electrical extension and appliance cords. Replace frayed or split cords.

EXTERIOR FINISHES

- Check for cracks and voids in exterior caulking and re-caulk as necessary.
- Inspect vinyl siding and clean, as needed, per manufacturer's instructions.
- Check exterior painted surfaces for damage and weathering. To repair, follow the maintenance instructions contained in the *Painting Section* of this guide.

ROOFING

- Visually inspect roof from ground for missing shingles and gaps in flashing. Contact roofing contractor should repairs be required.
- Check and clean gutters and down spouts and repair gaps in flashing and soffits.

PLUMBING

- Check water supply lines and valves to sinks and toilets. Tighten if loose or leaking.
- Clean out faucet aerators, spray nozzles and drains. (Usually these items are able to be unscrewed, cleaned out, and screwed back on again.)
- Check pipes and drains for water leakage.
- Remove water heater residue following instructions in the manufacturer's guide.

WINDOWS

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

ANNUAL CHECKLIST

ATTIC

- Check attic and crawl space to ensure that soffit vents are not blocked with insulation and move insulation back to its original location if there are voids on the attic floor.
- Check inside attic for signs of roof leaks. Be extremely careful not to damage or disturb electrical wiring or plumbing pipes that may be in the attic and never walk on the drywall.

CABINETS

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

DOORS

- Check and repair or replace weather-stripping on exterior doors as necessary.
- Check and tighten door hardware and lubricate as necessary.
- Tighten all bolts on garage doors.

TERMITE TREATMENT

- Contact an exterminator to set up termite treatment.

WINDOWS

- Check skylights for loose flashing and gaps in caulking. Take care not to crack asphalt shingles.
- Even when the house has vinyl siding installed, there may be areas where there is caulking around window that are wood wrapped. Check all windows for gaps in caulking at these locations and repair as necessary.

CornerstoneHomes' Homeowner Guide

Service and Maintenance Guide

Appliance
Attic
Brass and Chrome Fixtures
Cabinets
Cable Systems
Carpet Caulking
Ceramic Tile
Concrete Flatwork
Condensation
Countertops Decks
Disposals Doors
and locks
Drywall
Electrical Systems Expansion
and Contraction Fireplace
Floor Coverings – See *Carpet, Ceramic Tile, Hardwood Floors, Resilient Flooring*
Foundations
Garage overhead door
Grading and Drainage
Gutters and Downspouts
Hardwood Floors Heating
System Insulation
Landscape
Mildew
Mirrors
Paint and stain
Phone Jacks
Plumbing Resilient
Flooring Roof
Rough Carpentry
Shelving Skylights
Smoke Detectors
Stairs Ventilation
Walls and Ceilings
Water Heaters
Windows, Screens, and Patio Doors Wood
Trim and Moldings

APPLIANCES

Your new electric or gas appliances come with instruction manuals and other papers. Read all instruction literature carefully and fill out and mail any documents necessary to record warranties.

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

We confirm that all appliance surfaces are in acceptable condition during your orientation. We assign all appliance warranties to you, effective on the date of closing. The appliance manufacturers warrant their products directly to you according to the terms and conditions of these written warranties.

Caution: Any alteration of the standard installation of the appliance performed by an unlicensed contractor may void the warranty.

Before Calling for Service: If an electrical appliance fails to work, implement the following checklist before calling the manufacturer. Otherwise, you may be charged for a service call.

1. Check that the appliance is plugged in.
2. If the appliance is plugged into a wall-switched electrical outlet, make sure the switch is "ON".
3. The circuit breaker panel box controlling the appliance should be in the "ON" position. See *Circuit Breakers* in the *Electrical Systems* section.
4. Some appliances come with their own separate fuses or circuit breakers. Review the Manufacturer's Service Guide for exact location then check for proper setting.
5. Annually check the dryer for vent obstructions.

Helpful Hints:

Refrigerator/Freezer: Check the gaskets regularly for a tight seal. Clean gaskets regularly and adjust or replace gaskets as needed. Refrigerator temperatures should be between 38-42 degrees. Freezer temperatures should be set at zero degrees. Keep refrigerators and freezers away from heating appliances. Do not plug a freezer into a "ground/fault" receptacle because the circuit may trip and not be discovered for some time, allowing the contents of the refrigerator or freezer to spoil.

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

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

Disposal: Always use cold water when disposal is working. Corn stalks, celery or any other food that shreds should not be put into the disposal. Limit bones to small bones (i.e. small chicken bones). If the machine becomes stuck, turn it off, use the supplied wrench to free mechanism and try again. The disposal will rust if it is not used regularly. Periodically run ice cubes through disposal to sharpen blades.

Range Hood Fan/Microwave: The range hood/micro-hood fan filter collects grease; it should therefore be cleaned regularly. Soaking the filter or lightly brushing it in hot soapy water is the best cleaning method. Be sure the filter is totally dry before reinstalling it.

Dryer: Be sure to clean the lint trap after every load. Failure to do so may burn out the dryer's motor.

Appliance Serial Numbers

For warranty service on an appliance, contact the appropriate manufacturer directly at the service number provided in the appliance literature. You will need to supply the model and serial number (usually located on a small metal plate or seal attached to the appliance in an inconspicuous location.) For easy reference log those numbers on the following page.

CLOSE DATE _____

Appliance	Manufacturer	Model#	Serial #	Service Phone #
Range				
Range Hood				
Microwave				
Dishwasher				
Disposal				
Washer				
Dryer				
Refrigerator				

Solution to Common Appliance Problems

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Electric appliance not working.	Circuit breaker tripped.	Reset breaker or call qualified electrician. (This is not a warranty item and will be at the homeowner's expense.)
Garbage Disposal not working.	Clogged	Refer to Manufacturer's Guide.
Garbage disposal blades dull or dirty.	Normal	Run ice cubes through the garbage disposal.
Range hood not filtering properly.	Dirty filter.	Clean or replace filter.
Dishwasher not cleaning properly	No water flow into dishwasher	Water not turned on. Open valve under kitchen sink.
Dishwasher not cleaning properly.	Obstructed water flow.	Check for proper loading of dishwasher.
Water spots on dishes/glasses after using	Not using rinse agent.	Use rinse agent recommended by manufacturer.
Refrigerator not making ice.	Ice maker not turned on or water is not turned on.	Turn ice maker and water on. Make sure the ice maker water line is connected to the back of the refrigerator.
Condensation around	Temperature control is incorrectly set.	Reset temperature control.
Clothes dryer not drying properly.	Lint build up.	Check dryer filter. Make sure dryer vent is clear.
Clothes washer leaking on floor.	Washer drain line not installed correctly.	Install drain line correctly.

ATTIC

The attic space is neither designed nor intended for storage. We provide access to this area for maintenance of mechanical equipment that may traverse the attic space. When you perform needed tasks in attic, use caution and avoid stepping off wood members onto the drywall. This can result in personal injury or damage to the ceiling below. Your limited warranty does not cover such injury or damage. Be careful not to disturb the distribution of insulation as this will result in heating loss and higher energy costs.

Cornerstone Homes and the local building department inspect the attic before your closing to confirm insulation is correct.

BRASS and CHROME FIXTURES

The manufacturer treats brass fixtures with a clear protective coating, electro-statically applied, to provide beauty and durability. This coating is not impervious to wear and tear. Atmospheric conditions, sunlight, caustic agents such as paints, and scratches from sharp objects can cause the protective coating to crack or peel, exposing the brass and resulting in spotting and discoloration.

Cleaning

Initial care of these products requires only periodic cleaning with a mild, nonabrasive soap and buffing with a soft cloth.

Corrosion

The brass on your fixtures is a coating on top of a brass metal. Water having a high mineral content is corrosive to any brass fixtures.

Polish

When peeling, spotting, or discoloration occurs, you can sometimes restore the beauty of the metal by completely removing the remaining coating and hand-polishing the item with a suitable brass polish. Applying a light coat of wax and buffing with a soft cloth helps maintain the gloss.

Tarnish

Like sterling silver, brass will gradually tarnish and eventually take on an antique appearance.

During the orientation we confirm that the brass and chrome fixtures are in acceptable condition. Cornerstone Homes does not warrant against corrosion damage to the external surfaces or internal workings of plumbing fixtures.

CABINETS

Kitchen and bathroom cabinets should never be cleaned with harsh abrasives. Keep cabinet doors and drawers closed when not in use. Occasionally, check the cabinet hinges and screws to make sure they have not worked loose.

Cleaning

Products such as lemon oil or polishes that include scratch cover are suggested for wood cabinet care. Follow container directions. Use such products a maximum of once every 3 to 6 months to avoid excessive build-up. Avoid paraffin-based spray waxes and washing cabinets with water, as both will damage the luster of the finish.

Hinges, Drawer Glides

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

Moisture

Damage to cabinet surfaces and warping can result from operating appliances that generate large amounts of moisture (such as a crock pot) too near the cabinet. When operating such appliances, place them in a location that is not directly under a cabinet.

During the orientation we confirm that all cabinet parts are installed and that their surfaces are in acceptable condition.

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON CABINET PROBLEMS

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Cabinet door doesn't close properly.	Door hinge is out of adjustment.	Adjust hinges.
Cabinet door bangs when closing.	Missing cabinet door bumper pads.	Install new bumper pads.
Adjustable shelves not at correct height.	Shelf clips in wrong position.	Remove shelf one side at a time, move clips to desired position and replace shelves one at a time.
Cabinet drawer sticks.	Drawer guides out of alignment or debris in track.	Realign track. Check for debris and spray with silicon.
Scratch or dent in cabinet.	Normal use.	Fill crack or dent with colored putty.

Cabinet finish is dull.	Cabinet is dirty.	Clean with soap and water. Use mild furniture polish.
Cabinet swelling from moisture.	Water leak or spillage of water.	Check for water leaks. Wipe up any spillage of water.

CABLE SYSTEM

Homebuyer's Responsibility: The homeowner is responsible for contacting the local cable company for the initial hook-up.

CARPET

Most carpeting has built-in stain resistance which prevents spills and dirt from setting in the fibers. While most stain resistant treatment is fairly effective, it is not a substitute for prompt cleanup of household mishaps. Attaching furniture rests to the bottom of furniture legs distributes weight better and helps protect carpet. Your carpet should require little maintenance beyond regular vacuuming and occasional cleaning for tough stains or buildup of dirt in high traffic areas. Refer to various manufacturers' recommendations for additional information on the care of your floor coverings.

Cleaning

You can add years to the life of your carpet with regular care. Carpet wears out because of foot traffic and dirt particles that get trampled deep into the carpet beyond the suction of the vacuum. The dirt particles wear down the fibers like sandpaper and dull the carpet. The most important thing you can do to protect your carpet is to vacuum it frequently.

Vacuum twice each week lightly and once a week thoroughly. Heavy traffic areas may require more frequent cleaning. A light vacuuming is three passes; a thorough job may need seven passes. A vacuum cleaner with a beater bar agitates the pile and is more effective in bringing dirt to the surface for easy removal.

Vacuuming high-traffic areas daily helps keep them clean and maintains the upright position of the nap. Wipe spills and clean stains immediately. For best result, blot or dab any spill or stain; avoid rubbing. Test stain remover on an out-of-the-way area of the carpet, such as in a closet, to check for any undesirable effects. Have your carpet professionally cleaned regularly, usually once a year.

Some problem conditions that may occur with your new carpet and our suggested remedies are presented below.

Burns

Take care of any kind of burn immediately. First, snip off the darkened fibers. Then use a soap less cleaner and sponge with water. If the burn is extensive, talk with a professional about replacing the damaged area.

Crushing

Furniture and traffic may crush a carpet's pile fibers. Frequent vacuuming in high-traffic areas and glides or cups under heavy pieces of furniture can help prevent this. Rotating furniture to change the traffic pattern in a room promotes more even wear. Some carpets resist matting and crushing because of their level of fiber, but this does not imply or guarantee that no matting or crushing will occur. Heavy traffic areas such as halls and stairways are more susceptible to wear and crushing. This is considered normal wear.

Edges

Edges of carpet along moldings and edges of stairs should be held firmly in place. In some areas, metal or other edging material may be used where carpet meets another floor covering.

Fading

Science has yet to develop a color that will not fade with time. All carpets will slowly lose some color due to natural and artificial forces in the environment. You can delay this process by frequently removing soil with vacuuming, regularly changing air filters in heating systems, keeping humidity and room temperature from getting too high, and reducing sunlight exposure with window coverings.

Fuzzing

In loop carpets, fibers may break. Simply clip the excess fibers. If it continues, call a professional.

Pilling

Pilling, or small balls of fiber, can appear on your carpet depending on the type of carpet fiber and the type of traffic. If this occurs, clip off the pills. If they cover a large area, seek professional advice.

Seams

Carpet usually comes in 12-foot widths, making seams necessary in most rooms. Visible seams are not a defect unless they have been improperly made or unless the material has a defect, making the seam appear more pronounced than normal. The more dense and uniform the carpet texture, the more visible the seams will be. Carpet styles with low, tight naps result in the most visible seams. Seams are never more visible than when the carpet is first installed. Usually with time, use, and vacuuming the seams become less visible.

Shading

Shading is an inherent quality of fine-cut pile carpets. Household traffic causes pile fibers to assume different angles; as a result, the carpet appears darker and lighter in

these areas. A good vacuuming, which makes the pile all go in the same direction, provides a temporary remedy.

Shedding

New carpeting, especially pile, sheds bits of fiber for a period of time. Eventually these loose fibers are removed by vacuuming. Shedding usually occurs more with wool carpeting than with nylon or other synthetics.

Snags

Sharp-edged objects can grab or snag the carpet fiber. When this occurs, cut off the snag. If the snag is especially large, call a professional.

Sprouting

Occasionally you may find small tufts of fiber sprouting above carpet surface. Simply use scissors to cut off the sprout. Do not attempt to pull it, because other fibers will come out in the process.

Stains

No carpet is stain proof. Although your carpet manufacturer designates your carpet as stain-resistant, some substances may still cause permanent staining. These include hair dyes, shoe polish, paints, and India ink. Some substances destroy or change the color of carpets, including bleaches, acne medications, drain cleaners, plant food, insecticides, and food or beverages with strongly colored natural dyes as found in some brands of mustard and herbal teas.

Pretest any spot-removal solution in an inconspicuous area before using it in a large area. Apply several drops of the solution, hold a white tissue on the area, and count to ten. Examine both tissue and carpet for dye transfer and check for carpet damage.

During your orientation, we confirm that your carpet is in acceptable condition. We will correct stains or spots noted at this time by cleaning or patching. Cornerstone Homes is not responsible for dye lot variations if patches are made.

Your carpet is warranted by the manufacturer. Please review any warranty information you have for any additional items which may or may not be covered.

CAULKING

Time and weather will shrink and dry caulking so that it no longer provides a good seal. As routine maintenance, check the caulking and make needed repairs. Caulking compounds and dispenser guns are available at hardware stores. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to be certain that you select an appropriate caulk for the intended purpose.

Colored Caulk

Colored Caulk is available where larger selections are provided. As with any colored material, dye lots can vary.

Latex Caulk

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

Silicone Caulk

Caulking that contains silicone will not accept paint; it works best where water is present, for example, where a tub meets tile or a sink meets a countertop.

During the orientation we confirm that appropriate areas are adequately caulked.

CERAMICTILE

Cleaning

Ceramic tile is one of the easiest tiles to maintain. Use a wet cloth with warm water to clean the tiles. Avoid adding detergent to the water.

Grout Discoloration

Clean grout that becomes yellowed or stained with a fiber brush, cleanser, and water. Grout cleansers and whiteners are available at most hardware stores.

Sealing Grout

Sealing grout is your decision and responsibility. Once grout has been sealed, ongoing maintenance of that seal is necessary and limited warranty coverage on grout that has been sealed is voided.

Separations

Expect slight separations to occur in the grout between tiles. This grout is for decorative purpose only; it does not hold the tile in place. Cracks in the grout can be filled using premixed grout purchased from flooring or hardware stores. Follow package directions.

During the orientation we confirm that tile and grout areas are in acceptable condition. Cornerstone Homes will repair or replace cracked, badly chipped or loose tiles noted *at that time only*. Cornerstone Homes is not responsible for variations in color or discontinued patterns. New grout may vary in color from the original. Cracks appearing in grout of ceramic tiles at joints or junctions with other materials are commonly due to shrinkage. Cornerstone Homes is not responsible for color variations in grout or discontinued colored grout.

CONCRETE FLATWORK

We anticipate stresses on concrete driveways, walks, and steps and have provided contraction and expansion joints to minimize cracking. However, cracking is one of the characteristics of concrete, and a method of entirely eliminating cracks has not been discovered yet. Unanticipated cracking sometimes occurs from conditions such as severe frost. Ordinarily the cracks are of no serious consequence.

Heavy Vehicles

Do not permit heavy vehicles such as moving vans or concrete trucks to drive on your concrete work. We design and install this concrete for residential use only.

Color

Concrete slab/flatwork varies in color. No correction is provided for this condition, it is normal in concrete.

Use caution when spreading fertilizers with iron as they will cause rust spots. These spots are virtually impossible to remove.

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON CONCRETE FLATWORK PROBLEMS

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Stains on driveway or sidewalk.	Oil spills, fertilizer, or leaves.	Clean with commercially available cleanser.
Mildew or algae on concrete.	High moisture content.	Pressure clean with 50/50 solution of bleach and water.
Hairline Cracks.	Normal.	Fill with flexible concrete caulk.

CONDENSATION

Condensation on interior surfaces of the windows and frames comes from high humidity within the home combined with low outside temperatures. Family lifestyle significantly influences these conditions. Please be sure to follow the guidelines listed under the Ventilation section of this document.

Condensation can form on pipes and ducts in unfinished areas in the basement. This occurs especially when exterior doors are left open for extended periods of time. This can be minimized by keeping the vents open in the unfinished areas and limiting the amount of outside air allowed into the home.

COUNTERTOPS

Do not cut food directly on the countertop because the knife may dent or nick the surface. Protect the counter from heat and from extremely hot pans. If you cannot put your hand on it, do not put it on the counter. Do not use countertops as ironing boards and do not set lighted cigarettes on the edge of the counter.

Caulking/Silicone

The caulking/silicone between the countertop and the wall, along the joint at the backsplash, and around the sink may shrink, leaving a slight gap. Maintaining a good seal in these locations is important to keep moisture from reaching the wood under the laminates and to prevent warping. Cornerstone Homes will not repair damage resulting from failure to maintain this.

Cleaning

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

Mats

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

During your orientation we confirm that all countertops are in acceptable condition. We repair noticeable surface damage such as chips, cracks, and scratches noted on the orientation list. Repair of surface damage that occurs during or after your move-in is one of your maintenance responsibilities.

Laminates

Laminated countertops will have one or more discernible seams.

Separation from Wall

Separation of countertops from walls, backsplashes, and around sinks results from normal shrinkage of materials. Caulking will be a homeowner maintenance responsibility.

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON COUNTERTOP PROBLEMS

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Countertop separating from wall.	Settlement.	Re-caulk gap between countertop and wall.
Countertop chipped or	Accident.	Call for professional
Gaps in caulking at miters and around sink.	Shrinkage of caulk and seam.	Re-caulk or add seam filler.

Backsplash behind sink is	Caulking joint bad.	Re-caulk backsplash.
Rust stains.	Marks from metal cans or steel wool.	Apply rust remover per manufacturer's instructions

DECKS

Decks are a highly desirable feature for outdoor enjoyment. The wood used in decks is usually pressure treated or cedar, but decks generally require some maintenance to protect them from moisture. After the moisture from the treatment dries out and periodically thereafter, pressure-treated or cedar wood decks should have a coat of water repellant and preservative applied. Follow the supplier's recommendations. Over time a floor board may warp, causing a nail to pop up. Screw down or replace the floor board if needed.

DISPOSALS

The manufacturer's instructions will give precise directions for disposal operation. Always use cold water when the disposal is on and especially when grinding greasy substances. Many people erroneously conclude that because their waste disposal is capable of grinding up most food waste, it is also capable of eliminating grease and other substances they would not otherwise pour down a drain. In fact, you should be equally careful not to clog disposal drains with grease. In addition, you should avoid putting fibrous materials such as banana peels or corn husks down your disposal. Also avoid grinding bones or other hard materials.

Reset Buttons

Disposals have a reset button that works in much the same way as a circuit breaker. Should the disposal become overloaded with a substance it cannot grind, it will turn itself off. If this happens, turn the switch off, unplug the disposal, remove the substance obstructing the disposal's operation, plug the disposal back in, wait about three minutes, and push the reset button. (See your instruction booklet for its location.) Turn the switch on; if it still does not start, turn it off again and check to see if you have tripped the circuit breaker. *Caution: Be absolutely sure the circuit breaker is off before inserting a broomstick, wrench, or anything else to remove material when the disposal is stalled.*

DOORS and LOCKS

The doors installed in your home are subject to such natural characteristics of wood as shrinkage and warping. Due to natural fluctuations of humidity and the use of forced air furnaces, showers, and dishwashers, interior doors may occasionally require minor adjustments.

Bi-fold/Bypass Doors

Interior bi-fold/bypass doors sometimes stick or warp due to the weather conditions and may squeak. Apply a silicone lubricant to the tracks to minimize the inconvenience.

Failure to Latch

If a door will not latch because of minor settling, you can correct this by making a new opening in the jamb for the latch plate (re-mortising) and raising or lowering the plate accordingly.

Hinges

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

Keys

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

Locks

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

Slamming

Slamming doors can damage both doors and jambs and can even cause cracking in walls. Teach children not to hang on the doorknob and swing back and forth; this works loose the hardware and causes the door to sag.

Shrinkage

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

Sticking

Sticking is the most common problem with doors due to the natural expansion of lumber because of changes in humidity. When sticking is due to swelling during a damp

season, do not plane the door unless it continues to stick after the weather changes.

Caution: Using a plane on or sanding a photo-finish door may damage it.

Before you plane a door because of sticking, try two other steps: first, apply either a paste wax, light coat of paraffin wax, or candle wax to the sticking surface; or second, tighten the screws that hold the door jamb or door frame. If planing is necessary even after these measures, use sandpaper to smooth the door and paint the sanded area to seal against moisture.

Warping

Warping is usually caused by excessive moisture. If a door warps slightly, keeping it closed as much as possible often returns it to normal.

Weather Stripping

To maintain your home's energy efficiency, exterior doors come equipped with weather stripping made from a variety of materials, including metal, plastic, and rubber. This weather stripping must remain in place to prevent the loss of expensively conditioned air or infiltration of outside air. Metal weather stripping may need to be re-nailed if it becomes loose, bent out away from the edge of the door, or if it does not seal tightly when the door is closed. For rubber or plastic weather stripping, re-nailing or re-gluing with strong, water resistant household glue should be all that is necessary. Do not use cyanoacrylic (super) glue.

During the orientation we confirm that all doors are in acceptable condition and correctly adjusted. Due to normal settling of the home, doors may require adjustment for proper fit. Squeaky doors are a homeowner's maintenance task.

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON DOOR PROBLEMS

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Interior door does not stay closed.	Keeper out of adjustment.	Adjust keeper.
Door sticks or binds.	Settlement or swelling from moisture.	Adjust hinges, keeper, or jambs.
Door knob loose or rattles.	Loose screws.	Tighten screws.
Hinges on door squeak.	Metal rubbing.	Apply silicone spray to hinges.
Bi-fold doors do not close flush.	Door keepers out of adjustment.	Reinstall door, inserting wheels at top of door into track.
Sliding glass door sticking or hard to operate.	Bottom rollers out of adjustment.	Adjust rollers and apply silicone spray.

Sliding glass door will not lock.	Locking latch out of adjustment.	Adjust locking latch.
Entry door does not latch properly.	Tight weather-stripping or slight door movement.	Adjust weather-strip or door keeper.
Hot or cold air coming in around exterior door.	Threshold out of adjustment.	Adjust threshold.
Water infiltration at door.	Thresholds not snug to bottom of door.	Adjust and caulk threshold.
Garage door not operating properly.	Door is out of adjustment.	Call authorized repairman.
Can see light around entry door.	Loose weather-strip or sweep.	Adjust weather-strip or sweep to ensure tight fit.
Remote garage door opener not operating.	Weak or dead batteries.	Replace batteries.

DRYWALL

Normal shrinking in framing boards causes minor cracks and nail pops to appear in wallboard or plaster walls. Popped nails should not affect the strength of the wall.

Repairs

Most drywall repairs can be easily made. This work is best done when you redecorate the room.

Repair hairline cracks with a coat of paint. You can repair slightly larger cracks with spackle or caulk. To correct a screw pop, reset the screw with a screwdriver. Cover it with spackle, which is available at paint and hardware stores. Apply two or three thin coats. When dry, sand the surface with fine-grain sandpaper, and then paint. You can fill indentations caused by sharp objects in the same manner.

During the orientation, we confirm that drywall surfaces are in acceptable condition.

Repainting the entire wall or the entire room to correct this is your choice and responsibility. Due to the effects of time on paint, as well as possible dye lot variations, touch-ups are unlikely to match the surrounding area perfectly.

Lighting Conditions

Cornerstone Homes does not repair drywall flaws that are only visible under particular lighting conditions.

Related Warranty Repairs

If a drywall repair is needed as a result of poor workmanship (such as blister in tape) or other warranty-based repair, Cornerstone Homes completes the repair by touching up the repaired area with the same paint that was on the surface when the home was delivered. If more than one-third of the wall is involved, we will repair the wall corner to corner. You are responsible for custom paint colors or wallpaper that has been applied subsequent to closing. Due to the effects of time on paint and wallpaper, as well as possible dye lot variations, touch-up are unlikely to match the surrounding area perfectly.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

Know the location of the breaker panel and the main shut-off that controls all the electrical power to the home. Individual breakers control the separate circuits. Each breaker should be marked to help you identify which breaker is connected to which major appliances, outlets or other service. Should a failure occur in any part of your home, always check the breakers in the main panel box (usually located in the garage.)

Circuit Breakers

Circuit breakers and fuses protect the electrical wiring and equipment in your home from overloading. They are the safety valves of your home's electrical system. Every house should have a master circuit breaker. It generally is located near the smaller circuit breakers. When the master circuit breaker is tripped, the electricity to the house is cut off. Circuit breakers have three positions: on, off, and tripped. When a circuit breaker trips, the breaker will be in the center position. It must first be turned off completely before it can be turned on. Switching the breaker directly from tripped to on will not restore service.

Breaker Tripping

Breakers trip due to overloads caused by plugging too many appliances into a circuit, a worn cord or defective appliance, or operating an appliance with too high of a voltage requirement for the circuit. The starting of an electrical motor can also trip a breaker.

If any circuit trips repeatedly, unplug all items connected to it and reset it.

Buzzing

Fluorescent fixtures use transformer action to operate. This action sometimes causes a buzzing. This is normal. It may also take several seconds for a fluorescent fixture to come on once the switch is turned on.

Fixture Location

Moving fixtures to accommodate specific furniture arrangements or room use is your responsibility.

GFCI (Ground-Fault Circuit-Interrupters)

GFCI receptacles have a built-in element that senses fluctuations in power. Quite simply, the GFCI is a circuit breaker. Building codes require installation of these receptacles in bathrooms, the kitchen, outside and the garage. These safety devices are commonly installed where small appliances (such as hair dryers) are used near sources of water, which can “ground” a person and put him or her at risk of electrocution if the appliance malfunctions or is dropped into water. GFCIs cut the flow of electricity to the appliance within a fraction of a second if they detect a change in the flow of current to (and from) the appliance. Heavy appliances such as freezers, toaster ovens, vacuum cleaners or power tools can easily trip the GFCI breaker.

Power Failures

In case of a complete power failure, first determine if your neighbors have power. If they do not, notify the power company. If the power failure affects only your house, check the master switch and circuit breaker.

If only certain outlets in your home do not work, check to see if they are GFCI outlets. Many times GFCI outlets are “daisy-chained” together with other outlets in other rooms. For example, the outlets in the master bathroom may be on the same GFCI circuit as the main bathroom, therefore there would be only one GFCI outlet with the reset button on it between the two bathrooms.

EXPANSION and CONTRACTION

Changes in temperature and humidity cause all building materials to expand and contract. Different materials expand or contract at different rates. This movement results in separation between materials, particularly dissimilar ones. You will see the effects in small cracks in drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners, and where tile grout meets tub, sink or baseboards. While this can alarm an uninformed homeowner, it is normal.

Shrinkage of the wood members of your home is inevitable and occurs in every new home. Although this is most noticeable during the first year, it may continue beyond that time. In most cases, caulk and paint are all that you need to conceal this minor evidence of a natural phenomenon. Even though properly installed, caulking shrinks and cracks. Maintenance of caulking is your responsibility.

FIREPLACE

A gas fireplace provides the comfort and style of a wood-burning unit, but requires far less maintenance. Many gas fireplaces are far more efficient than their wood burning counterparts and as a result, produce less pollution. Gas fireplaces vent exhaust gases directly outside without a chimney. Use the same safety precautions with a gas fireplace as you would any other gas appliance. If you suspect a gas leak, evacuate the home and call the gas company immediately. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance, safety and use of your gas fireplace.

FLOORCOVERINGS

See: *CARPET, CERAMIC TILE, HARDWOOD FLOORS, RESILIENT FLOORING*

FOUNDATIONS

The weight of your house rests upon the foundation. The foundation consists of the footing – a large mass of concrete (sometimes poured into a trench) – and the foundation walls, which rest on the footing. Foundation walls are made of poured concrete. Foundation walls are subject to a wide variety of stresses and strains. Because the base of the wall is in the ground, it maintains a fairly constant temperature. However, the top portion extends out of the ground and may be subject to extreme seasonal temperature changes. These changes cause concrete to expand and contract.

Cracks

Combinations of stress and temperature variations may cause cracks in the foundation walls. These cracks do not affect the strength of the structures and may be easily repaired, if desired, with a concrete patch or caulking compound.

GARAGE OVERHEAD DOOR

Since the garage door is a large, moving object, periodic maintenance is necessary.

30-Weight Oil

Every Six months, apply a 30-weight automobile oil or similar lubricant to all moving parts: tracks, rollers, hinges, pulleys and springs. At the same time, check to see that all hardware is tight and operating as intended without binding or scraping. Avoid over lubricating to prevent drips on vehicles or the concrete floor.

Hurricane Posts

Your garage door may be designed with one or more vertical devices that when connected creates a reinforcing post that allows your garage door to withstand greater

wind loads during a storm. Familiarize yourself with its operation early. The instructions are printed on the inside of the door. If you are going out of town for any length of time it may be wise to secure these posts in case of a possible storm while you are away. Make sure to disconnect the post before operating the garage door, as severe damage will occur if operated in the secured position.

Lock

If the lock becomes stiff, apply a silicone or graphite lubricant. Do not use oil on a lock, as it will stiffen in winter and make the lock difficult to operate.

Opener

To prevent damage to a garage door opener, be sure the door is completely unlocked and the rope pull has been removed before using the operator. If you have an opener installed after the closing of your home, we suggest that you order it from the company that provided and installed the garage door to assure uninterrupted warranty coverage. Be familiar with the steps for manual operation of the door in the event of a power failure.

If Cornerstone Homes installed a garage door opener as one of your selections, during orientation we demonstrate the electric eye that provides a safety stop in the event someone crosses through the opening while the overhead door is in motion. Use care not to place toys or other stored items where they interfere with the function of the electric eye.

Safety

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe and reliable operation. Do not allow anyone near the door when it is in motion. Keep hands and fingers away from all parts of the door except the handle. Do not allow children to play with or around the door.

For your safety, after the expiration of the one-year warranty, have any needed adjustments made by a qualified specialist. The door springs are under a considerable amount of tension and require special tools and knowledge for accurate and safe servicing. Have the door inspected by a professional garage door technician after any significant impact to the door.

Sag

The garage door may sag slightly due to its weight and span.

Light Visible

Garage overhead doors cannot be air-tight. Some light will be visible around the edges and across the top of the door. Severe weather conditions may result in some precipitation entering around the door.

GRADING and DRAINAGE

The final grades around your home have been inspected and approved for proper drainage of your lot. The local building authorities as well as Cornerstone Homes inspect the site.

Drainage

Typically, the grade around your home should slope away from the home. Maintain the slopes around your home to permit the water to drain away from the home. Maintaining this drainage is your responsibility. If you alter the drainage pattern after closing, or if changes in drainage occur due to lack of maintenance or landscape modifications, the limited warranty is void.

Backfill settlement

Backfill or excavated areas around the foundation and at utility trenches should not interfere with the drainage away from your home. If these areas settle more than 6" during the first year, Cornerstone Homes will fill the areas one time according to the specifications of your written warranty. After the one-year period has expired, it is the homeowner's responsibility to correct any settlement of soil.

Erosion

Cornerstone Homes is not responsible for weather-caused damage to landscaped yards after the closing date.

Swales

Cornerstone Homes does not alter drainage patterns to suit individual landscape plans. Changes in grade may affect drainage on your lot. Cornerstone Homes advises against making changes.

GUTTERS and DOWNSPOUTS

Always keep gutters and downspouts clear of leaves, tree limbs, or anything that could cause overflowing. Be sure that downspouts direct water away from the foundation. Materials that accumulate in gutters can slow water drainage from the roof, cause overflows, and clog the downspouts.

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 commercial gutter caulking compound available at hardware stores.

Overflow

Gutters may overflow during periods of excessively heavy rain. This is expected and requires no repairs.

Standing Water

Gutters over 3 feet long are installed with a slight slope so that roof water will flow to the downspouts. Small amounts of water (up to one inch) will stand for short periods of time in gutters immediately after rain. No correction is required for these conditions.

HARDWOOD FLOORS

General Information

- A white filmy appearance can result from moisture, often from wet shoes or boots.
- Wood floors respond noticeably to changes in humidity in your home. Especially during winter months the individual planks or pieces expand and contract as water content changes. Use a humidifier throughout the winter months to keep wood movement and shrinkage to a minimum. This will not eliminate this natural occurrence, but will help reduce its effect.
- Expect some shrinkage around heat vents or any heat producing appliances.
- Warping will occur if the floor repeatedly becomes wet or is thoroughly soaked even once. Slight warping in the area of heat vents or heat producing appliances is also typical.

Gaps in Hardwood Floors

Gaps are the most common cause of complaints of hardwood floors.

It is normal for the interior of a home to become dry during heating seasons, for obvious reasons. Under this circumstance wood floors also dry out and shrink slightly. Properly made and properly installed wood floors should be expected to have "hairline gaps" between boards in dry months. Depending on the width of the boards used, the size of the room and the severity and duration of low outside temperatures (and hence the intensity of the heating), the term "hairline gaps" can have various interpretations.

Generally, "hairline gaps" can be considered to be normal if, in strips 2¼" wide or less:

1. They close up during non-heating months, and
2. They are not wider than the thickness of a dime in some locations, and vary from the thickness of a piece of stationery in most areas to scattered larger gaps up to the thickness of a dime.

The standard gap is even larger in hardwood strips wider than 2¼".

Plank or strip floors sometimes "panelize" due to movement of under floor construction, or if the finish cements individual boards into panels, so that all the shrinkage is concentrated into only a few gaps, with other joints remaining tight together.

In this event, the gaps that do appear will be considerable wider than the thickness of a dime.

Along these same lines, during the summer months, when the hardwood floor absorbs moisture from the higher humidity, the boards will push against each other if there are no gaps. In doing so, the boards are forced upwards causing small ridges along the mating edges. These also are normal.

If a gap is filled and repaired during the winter months when the floor is dry, the filler will likely be pushed out as the wood expands when it picks up moisture during the summer months. In the process, the filler material – that can be as hard as the wood – can crush or damage the edges of the flooring material. Sanding or scraping down a ridge along the edge of two mating pieces can also cause problems. When the boards start to shrink in the heating season the edge between the two boards will actually become a recession. This hollow can then collect dust and dirt which will then affect the way the hardwood naturally moves creating more issues. You could end up with bigger problems than if you had not attempted any repairs.

Cracks in hardwood floors are normal. Do not try to fix a floor that does not need to be repaired. You will waste your time and may end up causing more damage to the floor. Fix gaps in hardwood floors only if they truly need it.

Daily Care

In daily care of hardwood flooring, preventative maintenance is the primary goal. Please refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for cleaning and buffing pre-finished hardwood.

Cleaning

Sweep on a daily basis or as needed. *Never wet-mop a hardwood floor.* Excessive water causes wood to expand and can possibly damage the floor. When damp mopping, remove all excess water from the mop.

Preventative Care

- Placing heavy furniture or dropping heavy or sharp objects on hardwood floors can result in dimples.
- Install proper floor protectors on furniture placed on hardwood floors. Protectors will allow chairs to move easily over the floor without scuffing. Regularly clean the protectors to remove any grit that may have accumulated.
- Use protective mats at the exterior doors to help prevent sand and grit from getting on the floor. Gritty sand is wood flooring's worst enemy. However, be aware that rubber backing on area rugs or mats can cause yellowing and warping of the floor surface.
- Be aware that claws from household pets can cause dimples and scratches on hardwood floors.
- Do not set potted plants directly on a hardwood floor.
- Avoid walking on your hardwood floors with cleats, sports shoes and high heels. A 125-pound woman walking in high heels has an impact of 2,000 pounds per

- square inch. An exposed heel nail can exert up to 8,000 pounds per square inch. This kind of impact can dent any floor surface.
- When moving heavy furniture, do not slide it on wood flooring. It is best to pick up the furniture completely to protect the hardwood flooring.
 - Use an area rug in front of the kitchen sink.
 - Clean up food spills immediately with a dry cloth. Use a vinegar and warm water solution for tough food spills.
 - Exposure to direct sunlight can cause irreparable damage to hardwood floors. To preserve the beauty of your hardwood floors, install and use window coverings in these areas.
 - A dulling of the finish in heavy traffic areas is likely.
-

HEATING SYSTEM

Good maintenance of the air handler can save energy dollars and prolong the life of the air handler. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's literature on use and maintenance. The guidelines here include general information only.

Adjust Vents

Experiment with the adjustable registers in your home to establish the best heat flow for your lifestyle. Generally, you can reduce the heat in seldom-used or interior rooms. This is an individual matter and you will need to balance the system for your own family's needs. Remember to re-adjust the vents when using air conditioning.

Avoid Overheating

Do not overheat your new home. Overheating can cause excessive shrinkage of framing lumber and can materially damage the home. In the beginning, use as little heat as possible and increase it gradually. When colder weather is approaching, you should set your thermostat for "HEAT" and the temperature setting at 73 degrees, before the colder weather arrives. This will allow the system to maintain a comfortable temperature throughout the colder weather. Allowing the temperature inside your home to drop below 65 degrees before the heat is turned on increases the run time to raise the temperature.

Ductwork Noise

Some popping or pinging sounds are the natural result of ductwork heating and cooling in response to air flow as the system operates.

Filter

Remember to change or clean the filter monthly during the heating season. A clogged filter can slow air flow and cause cold spots in your home and possible damage to the system. Although it takes less than one minute to change the filters, this is one of the most frequently overlooked details of normal furnace care. Buy filters in large quantity for the sake of convenience.

If you have a permanent, washable, removable filter, you need to clean this monthly. Use water only to clean filter, tap to dry or air dry, and leave unit off for a brief period. Do not use soaps or detergents on the filter.

Furnished Home

The heating system was designed with a furnished home in mind. If you move in during a cooler part of the year and have not yet acquired all of your draperies and furnishings, the home may seem cooler than you would expect.

Thermostat

The thermostat helps to keep your entire house at a comfortable temperature. Individual room temperatures may be further regulated by adjusting the registers in the various rooms.

You can significantly reduce your heating bill by lowering the thermostat during the sleeping hours and when your home will be unoccupied for a prolonged period. The homes are equipped with set-back thermostats that can be programmed to reduce the setting shortly before bedtime and return it to normal prior to morning or wake-up.

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON HEATING SYSTEM PROBLEMS

Problems	Likely Cause	Solution
Air temperatures in different rooms or floors are uneven.	Air distribution unbalanced. Registers are obstructed.	Adjust air registers. Clear obstructions away from registers.
Reduced air flow or excessive dust on vents and registers.	Dirty air filter.	Clean or replace air filter as necessary.
Heat pump or fan not	Circuit breaker tripped.	Reset outside disconnect.
Heat pump not operating properly.	Outside unit obstructed by bushes, leaves, etc.	Clear obstructions from top and sides of unit.
Burning smell when winter or auxiliary heat first turned on.	Accumulated dust on electrical coils.	Normal. Happens once each year.
Blue/green light on thermostat stays on continuously. (Heat Pump Only)	Disconnect breaker tripped at heat pump.	Check disconnect breaker. Reset or replace as necessary.

INSULATION

Cornerstone Homes has installed insulation to meet building codes applicable at the time of construction. Any disruption of the insulation could cause your warranty to be void. If it becomes necessary to go into the attic space of your home, be sure you do not disturb the insulation. If you do, spread the insulation back out into a uniform depth.

LANDSCAPING

New sod has a very shallow root system for several weeks until it can establish roots down into the soil. Therefore daily watering is critical to keep the existing roots from drying out and the sod from shrinking. During hot weather it may be necessary to water twice during the day until the grass becomes rooted. If seams show gaps or turn yellow- brown it usually indicates lack of water, more frequent watering will prevent this. Established lawns require 1" of water per week in one or two applications. Test your sprinkler application rate by placing tin cans on the lawn, turn on the water and note the length of time it takes to fill the cans with one inch of water. This becomes the length of time you should water your established lawn per week during dry weather. More frequent on sandy soil, less frequent on clay soil.

Heavy traffic on your new sod lawn should be avoided, but just walking across it to set a sprinkler should not hurt it unless the ground is very damp and soft. The roots will start holding down and knitting it together a few weeks after installation.

Mow the grass when it reaches about 2" tall or most of the grass blades are beginning to curve. Allow the soil to dry out enough so that the mower tires do not damage the developing grass. Use a sharp mower set about 1-1/2" high. It is harmful to remove more than 1/3 the height of the grass at one cutting. This can produce a 'scalped' appearance and stress the lawn.

Fertilizer was applied to your lawn, so it won't need fertilizing again until it has been mowed twice or shows signs of turning yellow-green. New lawns planted in soil recently mixed with organic matter will require more frequent fertilizing the first two years, because decomposing ties up nitrogen in the soil (which it later releases.) During the growing season, March thru November, it is beneficial to apply a 12-4-8 fertilizer (or one with a 3-1-2 ratio) every 4-5 weeks to an established lawn. Application of fertilizer in late fall is the most important time because it stimulates root growth in the dormant months. Water well after fertilizing your lawn and also read the manufacturer's directions. Weed and feed type fertilizers are not recommended for use on a new sod lawn until it is over six months old and there is a weed problem. A healthy lawn is the best prevention.

MILDEW and MOLD

Mildew and Mold are both a type of fungus. It occurs naturally in the environment, and it is necessary for the natural decomposition of plant and other organic material. It spreads by means of microscopic spores borne on the wind, and is found everywhere life can be supported. Residential home construction is not, and cannot be, designed to exclude mold spores. If the growing conditions are right, mold can grow in your home. Most homeowners are familiar with mold growth in the form of bread mold and mold that may grow on bathroom tiles.

The homeowner can take positive steps to reduce or eliminate the occurrence of mold growth in the home, and thereby minimize any possible adverse effects that may be caused by mold. These steps include the following:

- Before bringing items in the home, check for signs of mold. Potted plants (roots and soil), furnishings, or stored clothing and bedding material, as well as many other household goods, could already contain mold growth.
- Regular vacuuming and cleaning will help reduce mold levels. Mild bleach solutions and most tile cleaners are effective in eliminating or preventing mold growth.
- Keep the humidity in the home low. Vent clothes dryer to the outdoors. Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms by opening the windows or by using exhaust fans to remove excess moisture in the air, and to facilitate evaporation of water from wet surfaces.
- Promptly clean up spills, condensation and other sources of moisture. Thoroughly dry any wet surfaces or material. Do not let water pool or stand in your home. Promptly replace any materials that cannot be thoroughly dried, such as drywall or insulation.
- Inspect for leaks on a regular basis. Look for discolorations or wet spots. Repair any leaks promptly. Inspect condensation pans (refrigerators and air conditioners) for mold growth. Take notice of musty odors, and any visible signs of mold.
- Should mold develop, thoroughly clean the affected area with a mild solution of bleach. First test to see if the affected material or surface is color safe. Porous materials, such as fabric, upholstery, or carpet should be discarded. Should the mold growth be severe call on the services of a qualified professional cleaner.

Cleaning mildew and mold from your home is your responsibility. Solutions that remove mildew and mold are available at the local paint or home improvement stores.

Cornerstone Homes' warranty excludes mildew and mold.

MIRRORS

To clean your mirror, use any reliable liquid glass cleaner available at most hardware or grocery stores. Avoid getting glass cleaners on plumbing fixtures as some formulas can deteriorate the finish. We confirm that all mirrors are in acceptable condition during the orientation.

PAINT and STAIN

Due to changes in formula for paint (such as the elimination of lead to make paints safer), washing flat painted surfaces is discouraged. Avoid abrasive cleaners, scoring pads, or scrub brushes. Flat paints show washing marks more easily than gloss paints do.

Touch-Up

When doing paint touch-up, use a small brush, applying paint only to the damaged spot. Touch-up 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 reliable cleaning product.

Wall Cracks

We suggest that you wait until after the first heating season to repair drywall cracks or other separations due to shrinkage.

See also: *DRYWALL*

During your orientation we confirm that all painted surfaces are in acceptable condition. Cornerstone Homes will touch up paint as indicated on the orientation list. You are responsible for all subsequent touch-up.

Touch-Up Visible

Paint touch-up is visible under certain lighting conditions.

PHONE JACKS

Your home is equipped with telephone jacks. Initiating phone service, additions to phone service, and moving phone outlets for decorating purposes or convenience are your responsibility. Cornerstone Homes will repair wiring that does not perform as intended from the phone interface box into the home. From the service box outward, care of the wiring is the responsibility of the local telephone service company.

PLUMBING

The plumbing in your home was installed by a professional and generally should need only minimum maintenance if you care for it properly. If any problem arises, attend to it promptly to prevent a bigger, and often more costly, problem.

Toilets

We want to draw your attention to a water-saving regulation that went into effect in 1993, which prohibits the manufacture of toilets that use more than 1.6 gallons of water per flush. In the search for a balance among comfort, convenience, and sensible use of natural resources, the government conducted several studies. The 1.6 gallon toilet turned out to be the size that overall consistently saves water.

As a result of implementing this standard, flushing twice is occasionally necessary to completely empty the toilet bowl. If it does not, use a plunger which can be purchased at any hardware store. Even though you flush twice on occasion, rest assured that overall you are saving water and we have complied with the law. Similarly, flow restrictors are manufactured into most faucets and all shower heads and cannot be removed. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Aerators

Even though your plumbing lines have been flushed to remove dirt and foreign matter, small amounts of minerals may enter the line. Aerators on the faucets strain much of this from your water. Minerals caught in these aerators may cause the faucets to drip because washers wear more rapidly when they come in contact with foreign matter. The aerators can be cleaned by unscrewing them and rinsing them in a small bowl of water. Be careful not to lose any of the small parts down the drain.

See also *Dripping Faucet*.

Cleaning

Follow the manufacturer's directions for cleaning fixtures. Avoid abrasive cleansers, they remove the shiny finish and leave behind a porous surface that is difficult to keep clean. Clean plumbing fixtures with a soft sponge and soapy water (a nonabrasive cleaner or a liquid detergent is usually recommended by manufacturers.) Then polish the fixtures with a dry cloth to prevent water spots. Care for brass fixtures with a good-quality brass cleaner, available at most hardware stores.

Clogs

The main cause of toilet clogs are domestic items such as disposable diapers, excessive amounts of toilet paper, sanitary supplies, Q-tips, dental floss, and children's toys. Improper garbage disposal use also causes many plumbing clogs. Always use plenty of cold water when running the disposal. This recommendation also applies to grease; supplied with a steady flow of cold water, the grease congeals and is cut up by the blades. If you use hot water, the grease remains a liquid, then cools and solidifies in the sewer line. Allow the water to run 10 to 15 seconds after shutting off the disposal.

You can usually clear clogged traps with a plunger. If you use chemical agents, follow the directions carefully to avoid personal injury or damage to the fixtures. Clean a plunger drain stopper (usually found in bathroom sinks) by loosening the nut under the sink at the back, pulling out the rod attached to the plunger, and lifting the stopper. Clean and return the mechanism to its original position.

Dripping Faucet

You can repair a dripping faucet by shutting off the water at the valve directly under the sink, then removing the faucet stem, changing the washer, and reinstalling the faucet stem. The shower head is repaired the same way. Replace the washer with another of the same type and size. You can minimize the frequency of this repair by remembering not to turn faucets off with excessive force. (Please note that some manufacturers do not use rubber washers.)

Extended Absence

If you plan to be away for an extended period, you should shut the circuit breaker to the hot water heater off, turn off the gas shutoff valve as well; you should also shut off the main water supply to the home.

Gold or Brass Finish

Avoid using any abrasive cleaners on gold or antique brass fixtures. Use only mild detergent and water or a cleaning product recommended by the manufacturer.

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 home. Familiarize yourself with the location of this shut off. Then contact the appropriate contractor. *We do not make adjustments for secondary damages (for example, damage to cabinets, wallpaper, drapes, personal belongings and flooring installed by another contractor.)* Check with your insurance coverage on these items.

Low Pressure

Occasional cleaning of the aerators on your faucets (normally every three to four months) will allow proper flow of water. The water department controls the overall water pressure.

Porcelain

You can damage porcelain enamel with a sharp blow from a heavy object or by scratching. Do not stand in the bathtub wearing shoes unless you have a protective layer over the bottom of the tub. If you splatter paint onto the porcelain enamel surfaces during redecorating, wipe it up immediately.

Running Toilet

To stop running water, check the shut-off 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, gently bend the float rod down until it stops the water at the correct level. The float should be free and not rub the side of the tank or any other parts. Also check the chain on

the flush handle. If it is too tight, it will prevent the rubber stopper at the bottom of the tank from sealing, resulting in running water.

Shut-Offs

Your main water shut-off is located near your water meter by the sidewalk in the front of your house. You use this shut-off for major water emergencies such as a water line break or when you install a sprinkler system or build an addition to your home. Each toilet has a shut-off on the water line under the tank. Hot and cold shut-offs for each sink are on the water lines under the sink. There is also typically a main water shut-off valve for your home located in the garage or in a closet near the garage.

Tank Care

Avoid exposing the toilet to blows from sharp or heavy objects, which 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.

During the orientation we confirm that all plumbing fixtures are in acceptable condition and that all faucets and drains operate freely.

Cosmetic Damage

Cornerstone Homes will correct any fixture damage noted on the orientation list. Repairing chips, scratches, or other surface damage noted subsequent to the orientation list is your responsibility.

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. Expect temperatures to vary if water is used in more than one location in the home.

SOLUTION TO COMMON PLUMBING PROBLEMS

Problems	Likely Cause	Solution
Water leaks at the valves.	Packing nut loose.	Tighten packing nut.
Water leaks at drain pipes.	Loose fittings.	Tighten fittings.
Main sewer line clogged.	Blockage in pipe.	Call plumbing contractor. Homeowner will be responsible for repair costs if stoppage was caused by their neglect.
Hot water coming out of cold water side at sinks or tubs.	Heat buildup in pipes.	Normal. Let water run a few minutes.

Hot water coming out of cold side. Cold water coming out of hot side at sinks or tubs.	Faucet hook-ups reversed.	Call plumbing contractor.
No hot water from electric water heater.	Tripped circuit breaker.	Check and reset circuit breaker.
No hot water from electric water heater.	Temperature setting too low.	Adjust temperature setting by turning knob higher.
Hot water recovery is slow.	Burned out heating element.	Call plumbing contractor.
Toilet runs constantly.	Water level in tank is too high.	Adjust float stem in toilet water tank downward.
Toilet makes loud noises when flushed.	Ball cock in water tank is not working properly.	Replace ball cock in toilet water tank.
Toilet makes dripping or gurgling noise.	Warped flapper.	Replace flapper.
Toilet backing up or overflowing.	Obstruction in line.	Turn toilet intake valve off and plunge toilet.

RESILIENT FLOORING

Resilient floors include vinyl and linoleum. For daily care, remove loose dirt with a broom, dust mop, or vacuum. Wipe up spills immediately, but if a spill or spot dries, remove it with a damp sponge, cloth, or mop. It is also important to note that rubber-backed floor mats will often yellow vinyl and linoleum.

ROOF

Your roof will give you many years of good service if it is properly maintained. Flashing seals those places where the roof abuts walls, chimneys, or valleys where two roof slopes meet.

Leaks

If a leak occurs, try to detect the exact location. This will greatly simplify finding the area that requires repair when the roof is dry.

Limit Walking

Limit walking on your roof. Your weight and movement can loosen the roofing material and in turn result in leaks. Never walk on the roof of your home when the roofing is wet as it can be very slippery. Also, never walk on your roof when it is hot and in direct sunlight, the tar in the roofing is very soft and very susceptible to damage.

Severe Weather

After severe storms, do a visual inspection of the roof for damage. Storm damage is excluded from warranty coverage. Notify your Homeowner's Insurance Company if storm damage is discovered.

Freeze-Thaw Cycle

Winter storms followed by relatively mild temperatures can cause freeze-thaw cycles that can create leaks in roofs. Most roof shingling is not a waterproof membrane. Rather, shingles are meant to shed water down their overlapping courses into gutters or off the roof overhang. Erratic weather conditions can cause a build-up of water—either from snow or ice dams formed on the roof or in gutters and downspouts. This water backs up under the shingles or eventually seeps through the shingles, causing leaks.

Solutions to Common Roof, Gutter and Downspout Problems

Problems	Likely Cause	Solution
Gutter Leakage.	Gutters plugged.	Clean gutters and downspouts.
Roof Leakage.	Loose flashing or loose pipe collars.	Secure and re-seal flashing and pipe collars.
Roof Leakage.	Loose or missing shingles and/or ridge vents.	Secure and/or replace loose or missing
Roof Leakage.	Rain blowing into vents.	Normal during severe storms.
Roof Leakage.	Drying and cracking mastic at stacks, flashing and skylights.	Add mastic or re-caulk. Check each year.
Shingles not lying flat.	Fastener loose.	Re-nail and re-seal shingle.
Skylight leakage.	Loose flashing.	Secure flashing. Inspect and reseal.

ROUGH CARPENTRY

Floor Squeaks

Some floor and stair squeaks are unavoidable. Although Cornerstone Homes does not warrant against floor squeaks, a reasonable effort will be made to correct them. There are special screw down tools available at certain hardware stores to try to eliminate floor squeaks.

Floor Deflection

Floors will deflect (bend) when walked on. This will be more noticeable next to hutches, book cases, pianos, chairs, and other heavy furniture. This is not a structural deficiency and Cornerstone Homes will take no action for this occurrence.

SHELVING

The storage shelves in your home were installed according to the manufacturer's specifications for the support of light weight storage. Any additional support is at the homeowner's discretion and expense. Cornerstone Homes is not responsible for repairs due to overloading of storage shelves.

SKYLIGHTS

A skylight may leak if its seal breaks. When your roof is being inspected for general maintenance, have your seals, caulking, and flashings around the skylights inspected for any cracks or interruptions.

Cleaning

Cleaning of the inner/outer dome of the skylight is part of homeowner maintenance.

Expansion Noises

Expansion noises are normal due to temperature changes and are not warranted.

Storm Damage

Damage due to heavy storms is not warranted by Cornerstone Homes. Your Homeowner's Insurance should cover this item.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Your home is equipped with smoke detectors; certain basic procedures will ensure that they function properly in an emergency. Carefully review the manufacturers

literature to familiarize yourself with each unit. Smoke detectors are battery operated and are also connected to your home's electrical system.

Testing

Periodically test the detector to see if it is working properly. When one smoke detector goes off, all smoke detectors in the house should also go off.

Batteries

When one battery beeps (indicating a new one is needed) replace the batteries in every smoke detector in the entire home.

Cornerstone Homes does not represent that the smoke detector will provide the protection for which they are installed or intended. You are responsible for obtaining fire insurance. Any problems with your smoke alarms need to be directed to the manufacturer, not CornerstoneHomes.

STAIRS

No known method of installation prevents all vibration or squeaks in a staircase. A shrinkage crack will develop where the stairs meet the wall. When this occurs, apply a thin bead of latex caulk and, when dry, touch up with paint.

Cornerstone Homes does not warrant against stair vibration and squeaks.

VENTILATION

Homes today are built more tightly than ever. This saves energy dollars but creates a potential concern. Condensation, cooking odors, indoor pollutants, radon and carbon monoxide may all accumulate inside your home. We provide mechanical and passive methods for ventilating homes. Your attention to ventilation is important to health and safety.

Building codes require attic vents to minimize accumulation of moisture. Attic ventilation occurs through vents in the soffit (the underside of the overhangs) or on gable ends. Driving rain sometimes enters the attic through these vents. Do not cover them to prevent this.

Your daily habits can help keep your home well ventilated:

- Develop the habit of running the hood fan when you are cooking.
- Also develop the habit of running the bath fans when bathrooms are in use.
- Air your house by opening windows for a time when weather permits.

Proper ventilation will prevent excessive moisture from forming on the inside of the windows, minimize mildew and mold growth, and help reduce cleaning chores considerably.

WALLS and CEILINGS

Your house has two types of walls: bearing and nonbearing. Nonbearing walls may usually be altered without fear of structural damage, but alteration of a bearing wall must be done carefully to avoid reducing its bearing capacity. Exterior walls are always bearing walls; whereas some interior walls *may* be non-bearing. All ceilings are essentially the same in structure, but they are made of a variety of materials. As with other building materials, wood may contract or expand with weather changes. It is not affected by heat or cold, but it may shrink under extreme dryness or swell under extreme humidity. Dissimilar materials expand or contract at different rates. This movement results in separation between materials, particularly dissimilar ones. You will see the effects in small cracks in drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners, and where tile gout meets tub, sink or baseboards. While this can alarm an uninformed homeowner, it is normal.

Shrinkage of the wood members of your home is inevitable and occurs in every new home. Although this is most noticeable during the first year, it may continue beyond that time. In most cases, caulk and paint are all that you need to conceal this minor evidence of a natural phenomenon. Even though properly installed, caulking shrinks and cracks. Cornerstone Homes will deliver your home with caulking properly installed. Required caulking after that time is the homeowner's responsibility.

WATERHEATERS

All water heaters have a control mechanism to govern water temperature. The dial should be set at 120 degree F or lower. Your household's individual preferences should determine the hot water temperature. The lower the temperature setting, the less fuel you will use, which could produce considerable savings on your utility bills. Avoid storing anything near the water heater that might create a fire hazard.

WINDOWS, SCREENS, and PATIO DOORS

Contact a glass company for re-glazing of any windows that break.

Cleaning

Clean glass as needed with vinegar and water, a commercial glass cleaner, or a product recommended by the window manufacturer.

Condensation

Condensation on interior surfaces of the window and frame is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperature. Your family's lifestyle controls the humidity level within your home. Anything which tends to evaporate moisture will contribute to excessive humidity, such as baths, showers, excessive boiling when cooking, laundry hung up to dry and a large number of plants watered daily. Humidity can be reduced by simply opening the window in the laundry area, closing bathroom door and opening the window after a shower or bath, or ventilating the entire house once a day. You influence the humidity level within your home; Cornerstone Homes provides no corrective measure for this condition.

Door Locks

Acquaint yourself with the operation of patio door hardware for maximum security. Movement due to shrinking of lumber and natural movement of your house may make the door locks not operate correctly. Minor adjustments can be made to a lock in order to bring it back to its original functionality.

Door Tracks

Keep patio door tracks clean for smooth operation and to prevent damage to the door frame. Silicone lubricants work well for these tracks. It is normal for water to collect in the tracks of sliding glass doors. All sliding glass doors are provided with drain holes at one or both ends to allow water to drain. Sliding glass doors will require a reasonable effort to open and close due to considerable weight and rubber seals. This is normal and does not require a repair.

Invisible Glass

Under certain lighting conditions, door glass may be hard to see. If you keep the screen fully closed when the glass door is open, your family will be accustomed to opening something before going through. Also, if you keep the screen door closed when the sliding glass door is closed, you will be able to see that you need to open something and not just try to walk through the opening and therefore hitting the glass door.

Sticking Windows

Most sliding windows (both vertical and horizontal) are designed for a 10-pound pull. If sticking occurs or excessive pressure is required to open or close window, apply a silicone lubricant. This is available at hardware stores. Avoid petroleum-based products.

Vents

Certain windows in your home contain air vents. Use of these vents help regulate the fresh air to those rooms and are your only constant source of fresh air.

Weep Holes

In heavy rains, water may collect in the bottom channel of the 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.

We confirm that all windows and screens are in acceptable condition during the orientation. Cornerstone Homes will repair or replace broken windows or damaged screens noted on the orientation list only.

Infiltration

Some air and dust will infiltrate around windows, especially before the installation of landscaping in the general area. Cornerstone Homes' warranty excludes this occurrence.

Scratches

Cornerstone Homes confirms that all window glass is in acceptable condition at the orientation. Minor scratches on windows can result from delivery, handling, and other construction activities. Cornerstone Homes will replace glass that has scratches readily visible from a distance of 10 feet. Cornerstone Homes does not replace glass that has scratches visible only under certain lighting conditions.

WOOD TRIM and MOLDING

Shrinkage of wood trim occurs during the first two years or longer, depending on the temperature and humidity. All lumber is more vulnerable to shrinkage during the heating season. Maintaining a moderate and stable temperature helps to minimize the effects of shrinkage. Trim and molding, such as baseboard, may separate from the floor and leave a small space that will catch dust and dirt. This separation is part of the normal process of settling and shrinking in your home. Loosening the trim and re-nailing it in its proper position will remedy the problem. Wood will shrink less lengthwise than across the grain. Wood shrinkage can result in separation at joints of trim pieces. You can usually correct this with wood putty available at most hardware stores.
