



Home Care Guide

Detailed, practical, easy-care tips to help you maintain your beautiful new home.

Important: If a problem occurs during your warranty period and it cannot be remedied by the simple fixes contained in this guide, please contact a Signature Companies Representative.

AIR CONDITIONING/HEATING

Thermostats — The thermostat (usually located near the air return duct) helps to keep your home at an even temperature throughout. Individual room temperature may vary and can be regulated by adjusting the registers in the various rooms. The temperature may also vary between floors as warm air rises. If you have a second floor, it is likely to be warmer than a lower level. These variations in temperature within a home can be further minimized by leaving the furnace circulating fan on more consistently. If your home is heated by a warm air furnace or a heat pump your thermostat also may contain controls for converting from the cooling system to the heating system and vice versa. A recommended setting for a thermostat is 72 degrees for heating and 78 degrees for cooling.

Register — The registers throughout your home help to regulate the flow of air and to maintain the desired temperature. By opening and closing the registers and dampers, you can determine the amount of cool or warm air that enters a room. Once the registers and dampers are adjusted, they, together with the thermostat, will maintain the temperature in your home. In addition to the air outlets, your home will have an air intake (return) register. None of these registers should ever be obstructed.

Filters — Your heating & cooling system has an air filter to help keep the air in your home clean. For maximum efficiency, this filter should be replaced or cleaned regularly (once a month). Clogged filters can cause a unit to malfunction. The homeowner is responsible with familiarizing themselves with their heating & cooling system and the location of said filter of such system.

Insulation — Your home has been designed to provide the proper insulation for our climate. Open doors, windows, fireplace flues and clogged filters are more often the cause of inadequate cooling or heating than deficient insulation. A lack of proper window treatments can also prevent the heating/cooling system from functioning properly.

Inspection — A central air conditioning or heating system should be checked periodically by a professional repairman. See your instruction manual for the frequency of this care. (See also "Electrical Service Entrance.")

Gas Furnace — Gas furnaces are normally automatic starts. If your heating unit is not an automatic start, your pilot light will have to be lighted manually at the start of the heating season and turned off at the end of the heating season. Your furnace and vent stack should be inspected by a professional repairman at least once a year prior to the heating season.

Heat Pumps — Heat Pumps work to heat or cool your home. They transfer warm air from one location to another. As a result, the warm air delivered through your registers is cooler than the "heated air" produced by a gas or electric furnace. This gradual heat will keep the home comfortable. In many areas, heat pumps are equipped with an electrical back-up system to be activated in extremely cold weather.

APPLIANCES

Your new electrical or gas appliances are accompanied by instruction manuals and other papers. Look through them carefully. Remove, fill out and mail any return postcards necessary to record warranties. Keep a list of the authorized service agencies in the back of this booklet. Read all instructional literature so that you will know how to get the best from what you own, and so you will understand all appliance warranties. If an electrical appliance fails to work, before calling Signature Companies appliance subcontractor be sure the appliance is plugged in and that no circuit breakers are tripped. If a gas appliance fails to work, check to see that the pilot light is lit. If you suspect a gas leak, turn off the main gas valve near the meter and call the utility company.

ATTIC VENTILATION

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If your home has a pitched roof, the space between the ceiling and the roof may have louvered openings. Louvered openings should remain unobstructed all year round. If your home has soffit vents and/or ridge vents, they should also be clear of debris. Ridge vents should be checked periodically to ensure they are secure and have not come loose in high winds.

BATHTUBS, SINKS AND SHOWERS

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Tile and Porcelain Enamel — The surface of these fixtures is hard, smooth and glossy like a mirror, but it is not indestructible. Accidents or improper cleaning will cause chipping, scratches and stains. A blow from a heavy or sharp object will chip the surface and scraping or banging metal utensils in a sink will gradually scratch and dull the surface. The finish is then susceptible to stains, which become increasingly difficult to remove. Shiny new fixtures can also be dulled or stained within a short time through improper or excessive use of strong abrasive cleaners. Most household cleansers are mildly abrasive, but used with plenty of water, some of them are not harmful; however, a nonabrasive cleanser is safer. If you prefer a dry material, baking soda and Bon Ami® Powder (not Bon Ami® Cleanser) are nonabrasive. Most stains are caused by dirt, food, grease, rust or water minerals.

Stainless Steel — Stainless steel fixtures and sinks generally resist staining and need a thorough scrubbing only occasionally. Do not use steel wool pads, as these can remove the finish of stainless-steel sinks. Use a nonabrasive cleanser or a commercial stainless-steel cleanser. Stainless steel sinks will dent when they receive a strong impact.

Fiberglass Tubs and Showers — Never use powdered cleansers or any type of abrasive on Fiberglass® tubs and showers. Special Fiberglass cleaners are available at most supermarkets. Spray window cleaners are also effective. For long term protection, wax your Fiberglass units with a high-quality automobile wax immediately on move in and after each major cleaning.

Shower Enclosures — To clean shower enclosures, an ordinary dishwashing detergent (not soap) will do a good job unless hard water minerals have been deposited. For these, use a commercial glass cleaner containing ammonia or 1 tablespoon of household ammonia in a quart of water. **WARNING:** Be sure to read the caution note on the label before using ammonia. Never use steel wool or scouring pads on the metal portion of these enclosures. It will remove the protective finish applied by the manufacturer and cause unsightly scratches.

To prolong the life and beauty of your plumbing fixtures follow these precautions:

1. Don't let food wastes stand in the sink. Dispose of food waste through your disposal as it accumulates.
2. Don't use plumbing fixtures to hold paint cans, trash, or tools when you are re-decorating. Cover them when painting walls and ceilings.
3. Don't step in a bathtub or shower stall with shoes on for any reason. Shoe soles carry hundreds of gritty particles that will scratch the surface.
4. Don't use sink, tub or toilets as receptacles for photographic or developing solutions. Developer stains are extremely difficult to remove.
5. Wipe shower area dry after each use.
6. Utilize bathroom exhaust fans or open bathroom windows to remove excessive moisture from the room.

By observing these suggestions and the preceding instructions, you will prolong the newness and luster of your fixtures.

CABINETS

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Kitchen and bathroom cabinets should never be cleaned with harsh abrasives. Wood cabinets may be cleaned like any other wood furniture with lemon oil or a good furniture oil unless it has been plastic coated. An excellent product for hiding minor nicks and scratches that occur over time in wood cabinetry is Old English® furniture polish. Keep cabinet doors and drawers closed when not in use. Periodic use of silicone spray lubricant on drawers and hinges will improve operating efficiency.

CARPETING

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Given proper care, the carpeting in your home will provide years of service. You should vacuum at least once a week using a powerful upright vacuum cleaner. This is especially important with some of the denser shear and shag patterns. You should also plan to give your carpeting a professional cleaning at least once a year to remove deep down dirt and stubborn stains. In regard to stains, always attack them immediately. Even half an hour after the accident can be too late. A number of good quality stain and spot removers are available; however, we suggest you seek the advice of a carpeting expert as to what is best for your brand and style of carpet. You should be aware of the material that your carpet is made of. Should your carpet become wet or saturated for any reason, the bottom of furniture legs need to be taken out of contact with the carpet. Aluminum foil or plastic

coasters work well in this situation. With very severe staining or spotting, don't hesitate to call in a professional. The small expense will pay off in longer carpet beauty and service.

CAULKING/EXTERIOR

Exterior caulking will separate and deteriorate over the life of the home. If this situation is not monitored and corrected on a consistent basis, moisture can work its way behind wood trim or siding and cause serious rotting problems. Leaks around doors and windows can also result if this condition goes unnoticed for any length of time.

CERAMIC TILE

Ceramic tile floors are generally easy to maintain. To keep them looking new, you need only wipe with a moist cloth and wet mop from time to time. The grout used between ceramic tile can be cleaned using a brush and a mild cleanser. Grout sealers are available to make the grout more resistant to stains. Once again, these products can be purchased at most home care centers.

COUNTER TOPS

The majority of kitchen counter tops are constructed of top-quality plastic laminate materials. Because these products are a sheet of very hard plastic laminated to a wooden base, you must be careful not to disturb the bond between the wood and the plastic. To avoid such a problem, always be sure to use a hot pad for anything that is likely to exceed 250 degrees in temperature. Anything coming directly off a burner or from the oven will be much too hot to place directly on the plastic surface. Laminated plastic tops are very easy products to maintain however, there are a few ways to increase their life and prolong their beauty:

1. Most spots, glass rings, etc. will usually wipe clean with a damp cloth and mild soap. For more stubborn stains, we recommend Formica brand spray cleaner. Be careful of the inks used in marking grocery products, especially meat and produce. They are often indelible and can be extremely difficult to remove. Newspaper ink can also produce an indelible stain.
2. Never cut items directly on the countertop. They will scratch and knife marks can become unsightly hiding places for dirt.
3. Counter tops are not constructed for sitting. Excessive weight can cause warping, drawer malfunction and even cause the top to pull away from the wall.

To prevent leaks, be certain to monitor the condition of all caulking at countertops and redo if separation or shrinkage occurs. If you have a ceramic tile countertop, see "Ceramic Tile" for care information. If you have a Corian® Countertop, please refer to the manufacturer's care and maintenance information. Your bath vanity tops, and perhaps your bath sinks, are made of either top-quality plastic laminate (see above) or they are made of a cultured marble product that will give you classic good looks and utilitarian service. These products will scratch and burn if mistreated however, so treat them gently. Always be especially careful with razor blades, manicure equipment and bathroom appliances. Cigarette burns are almost impossible to remove without professional assistance. Care for your cultured marble with any good quality, non-abrasive bathroom cleaner. If hard water minerals collect, they may be removed with a mild ammonia solution of one tablespoon to each quart of water. Caulking of the vanity tops is an important element of homeowner maintenance and should be monitored.

DISPOSALS

Food should not be deposited into an inactivated disposal and the unit then turned on. The disposal will provide more effective disposing action if cold water is running, and the unit is turned on prior to depositing food into it. When the unit is running, cold water should be used. This helps to solidify any grease in the disposal which can then be chopped up and moved out with the remainder of the foods. Once a month, a tray of ice cubes can be deposited into the disposal and chopped up. This has a cleaning action on the blades and exit areas of the disposal. If the disposal is jammed:

1. Turn off the switch for the disposal before trying to unclog.
2. Use the allen wrench provided.
3. Remove whatever has jammed the disposal.
4. Press the reset button which is located on the bottom of the disposal, and the unit should be ready to function again.

DOORS

Doors can cause minor problems. However, most door problems can be handled with minimum skill. Sticking caused by shrinkage and swelling is the most common problem with doors, and it is a common characteristic in new homes. If the sticking is caused by swelling in damp weather, fold sandpaper around a wood block and sand the edge that binds. If the sticking is the result of uneven alignment, which can occur as your home settles,

check to see that the hinge screws are tight and holding properly. If they are tight and the door is still out of alignment, sand or plane the edge that binds. Warping is a result of too much moisture. Should a door ever warp, a good repair is to dry it in the sun. The door should be elevated off the ground, and it should be positioned flat with the warped side up. If drying a door thoroughly won't straighten a badly warped door, apply weight to the bulged side and leave it for two or three days. If this "first aid" doesn't solve the problem, you should call in a carpenter to make the repair. Always paint or varnish any areas that have been sanded or planed to protect those areas from moisture and further swelling. Exterior doors should be painted or varnished whenever the house is painted. In hot, humid climates, wooden exterior doors have to be refinished on a regular basis. Wooden garage doors require refinishing more frequently. Aluminum doors do not need painting. Special care to the tracks of aluminum sliding glass doors is recommended. Always keep the tracks clean of debris. A very small amount of oil is also recommended on a periodic basis, at both the bottom of the door and the lock mechanism. Silicone lubricant is good for the tracks. Bi-fold and by-pass closet doors and "pocket" doors offer tremendous convenience to the homeowner, as well as enhance the looks of your home; however, the mechanics of these types of doors are more complicated than a hinged door. Gentleness is the key when operating each type. No up or down pressure should be applied. In the case of bi-fold doors, pull toward you when opening and let the door open itself. With sliding "pocket" doors, gently pushing in the direction the door moves is all that is necessary. Be certain to avoid driving nails into the "pocket" area of a sliding door. Bi-fold and by-pass closet doors have adjustment areas should they become difficult to operate or jump from their tracks. These are easily found on the rear side of the doors. Also, these types of doors are installed in matched sets. If you should remove the doors for any reason, be sure to put each section back in its original position.

The moving parts of garage doors should be oiled about every three months. The screws and bolts that fasten the hardware to any wood areas should be tightened in about a year because the wood shrinks a little as it ages.

DRAINS

Each plumbing fixture in your home has a drain trap, a J-shaped piece of pipe designed to provide a water barrier between your home and the danger of sewer gas. The trap holds water, which prevents the airborne bacteria and odor of the sewer gas from entering the house. If any fixture is used infrequently, it should be turned on at regular intervals to replace evaporating water and ensure that the barrier remains intact.

Traps, because of their shapes, are also the point at which drains are most likely to become clogged. When the drainpipe from a sink, shower, or tub stops up, first use a plunger. Be sure the rubber cap of the plunger covers the drain openings, and the water comes well up over the cup edge. Working the plunger up and down rhythmically 10 to 20 times in succession will build up pressure in the pipe and do more good than sporadic, separated plunges. Be sure to plug the overflow outlet, if there is one, with a piece of old cloth, and close the other drain when working on a double sink. If the plunger doesn't work, try using a plumber's snake, which can be rented or purchased at a hardware or plumbing store. Be sure to turn the handle of the snake in the same direction when removing it as you did in inserting it. This will usually keep any matter attached to the snake from coming loose before it is removed. If the drain can be partly opened with the plunger or snake, boiling hot water (no hotter than 140 degrees for plastic pipe) may finish the job. If not, you can open the trap under the fixture. Put a bucket or pan under it to catch water. A piece of wire may help dislodge the blockage. The snake can also be run in at this point.

Although it is sold commercially as a drain cleaner, never use caustic soda to open a drain. It will combine with the grease from soap or food wastes to form an insoluble compound. Potash lye or caustic potash may be added to finish opening a drain, but never use them on a completely stopped up drain. They may take as long as overnight to work, and if you ultimately have to open the trap, the chemicals would be a hazard.

WARNING: Because potash lye and caustic potash are highly corrosive, always pour them slowly into the drain to prevent splattering. Never pour water into the chemical. Wear old clothes, rubber gloves, and goggles or safety glasses. Never use a plunger on a drain after chemicals have been added; the water may splash and cause an injury or damage nearby surfaces. If the stoppage is in the line past the trap, try using the snake at the clean-out plug nearest the blockage. These plugs are located on the drain lines throughout the house.

PREVENTION: To avoid stopped up drains, a cardinal rule is never to pour grease into a drain or toilet. Ordinary washing soda (not baking soda) added to a drain on a regular basis will help keep it clear of grease from soap and cooking utensils. Run hot water through the drain, turn off the water, add 3 tablespoons of washing soda, and follow it with just enough hot water to wash it down the drain opening. Let it set for 15 minutes and run more hot water.

SPECIAL NOTE: Your food waste disposal has special instructions to avoid stoppage, blockage and heavy grease buildup. Refer to the manufacturer's instruction manual for details. (See "[Plumbing](#)" and "[Toilets](#).")

DRIVEWAYS, WALKS AND PATIOS

Most driveways, walks and patios in our homes are constructed of concrete or asphalt. We have anticipated normal stresses on these concrete areas and have provided contraction and expansion control joints to minimize cracking; however, cracking is one of the characteristics of concrete and a method of entirely eliminating cracks

is not possible. Unanticipated cracking sometimes occurs from unforeseeable conditions, such as severe frost or changes in homesite grade which prevents proper runoff from rain or watering. Ordinarily, the cracks are of no serious consequence. Minor repairs can be made by following these steps:

1. Roughen the edges of the crack if they are smooth.
2. Clean out loose material and dirt.
3. Soak the old concrete thoroughly. (The crack should be sopping-wet, but water should not be standing in it.)
4. Fill the crack with patching cement slightly higher than the crack to allow for shrinkage. Commercially prepared patching mixtures need only the addition of water but be sure the mixture you buy is appropriate for concrete.
5. Cover and keep damp for several days. The longer the drying time the stronger the patch will be.
6. When the cement has partly set, remove excess cement with a wire brush. At this stage the surface of the cement appears sandy. You should consider sealing your concrete surfaces with a good quality sealer. This will protect the surface and the finish from water, road salt, or oil stains.
7. It is recommended that the homeowner seal expansion joints with an approved NP1 concrete joint sealant product.

If your driveway is asphalt, a seal coat mixture should be applied every two years. This practice will protect the surface of the drive, help fill in the crevices, help to keep water from penetrating and deteriorating the asphalt, and maintain the good looks of your driveway. Never park bicycles on asphalt or set outdoor furniture on asphalt, as the sharp ends of a kick stand or chair legs can poke holes in it.

NOTE: You should avoid applying any type of salt to concrete or asphalt, as it will deteriorate the surface of these materials. To assist you in having traction on ice you may use sand. Remember to provide a mat at the front door so sand will not be tracked into your home.

ELECTRICAL RECEPTACLES

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The wiring in our homes, meet the code requirements and safety standards for the normal use of electrical appliances. Ordinarily, small appliances, which require your personal attendance for operation, may be plugged into any electrical receptacle without fear of overloading a circuit. However, the use of large appliances, or of many small appliances on the same circuit, may cause an overload of the circuit and trip a breaker. This is especially true of electric space heaters. If this happens frequently, contact a reliable electrical contractor to learn whether additional wiring is needed to meet your requirements.

Most municipal electrical codes now require bathroom and exterior convenience outlets to be wired to breakers which utilize Ground Fault Interrupter Circuits (GFI). These circuits are very sensitive, and any undue resistance or overload will trip the breakers. Do not use heavy appliances or more than one appliance at a time on these circuits. (See "[Electrical Service Entrance](#)" and "[Electrical Troubleshooting](#).") Never plug refrigerators or freezers into a GFI outlet.

ELECTRICAL SERVICE ENTRANCE

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The electrical wiring and equipment in our homes is protected by circuit breakers. They are the safety valves of your home's electrical system. The electrical service entrance, which provides power to the service panel, has been designed for the electrical needs of your home. Do not tamper with this cable. Every home has a master circuit breaker located in the service panel box along with smaller circuit breakers. When the master breaker is tripped the electricity in your home is cut off. Circuit breakers may be reset by first switching the breaker to FULL OFF and then back to FULL ON.

Your air conditioning unit may have heavy duty cartridge fuses or some other disconnect mechanism located in a small box next to the service panel or next to the unit. These may be replaced by simply pulling them from their retaining clips and installing a new cartridge. BE CERTAIN TO TURN OFF POWER BEFORE REMOVING CARTRIDGES. (See "[Electrical Receptacles](#)" and "[Electrical Troubleshooting](#).")

ELECTRICAL TROUBLESHOOTING

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Refer to the following checklist BEFORE reporting electrical problems:

1. If receptacles won't work, check to be certain the circuit breaker has not been tripped. If so, reset it. If not, make sure the receptacle is not controlled by a wall switch which is in the OFF position.
2. If individual ceiling lights or lamps do not come on, check the bulb in another fixture. If the bulb is good, check the circuit breaker to see if it is tripped and reset if necessary. Also, check for wall switches that may be turned off.
3. If your disposal or dishwasher won't operate; first, for the disposal, push the reset button located on the disposal. Second, if your appliances are designed to be plugged in (some are directly wired), check to be sure both appliances are plugged into the proper receptacle. The duplex receptacle under your

- sink is especially wired with one outlet for the dishwasher and one for the disposal (connected to a wall switch). Also check the circuit breaker.
4. If an electric water heater won't function, check the circuit breaker. If that's no help, turn the power off and push the reset button located under the water heater access cover.
 5. If your oven won't heat, refer to the manufacturer's manual to be certain you are properly operating the time controls. Sometimes this can be tricky. Also check the circuit breaker.
 6. If the bath or utility exhaust fan won't run and makes no noise (hum) or movement the problem is normally electrical. If there is any movement or humming noise, the problem normally is in the fan unit.
 7. If an outlet sparks when plugged into, be certain the appliance is off before plugging in. If it still sparks, try another outlet. If you get sparks from a second outlet the problem is normally in the appliance cord. If you do not get sparks, have the receptacle inspected. Also, sparks from wall switches should be checked by an electrician.
 8. If a wall switch or receptacle is hot to the touch, you should immediately trip the circuit breaker serving that fixture and contact an electrician. (See "[Electrical Receptacles](#)" and "[Electric Service Entrance](#).")

FLOOR TILE

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Your home contains a vinyl tile that we call resilient flooring. Give daily care to resilient floors by removing loose dirt with a broom, dust mop, or vacuum. Wipe up spills immediately, but, if a spill dries, remove it with a damp sponge, cloth or mop. Damp mop occasionally to prolong the period between cleanings. However, when floors are dull or cannot be refurbished by mopping, give them a thorough cleaning.

To clean resilient floors, use a good detergent diluted as recommended by the manufacturer. Use just enough mechanical action with a mop, cloth or floor scrubber to loosen dirt. Then take up the cleaning solution, rinse the floor and let it dry. Some resilient floors are designed never to need waxing, but most of them require a coat of floor polish, such as a "mop and let dry" product. The best polish for most resilient floors is a water emulsion wax. Use either a floor finish or a wax on the clean dry floor. Finishes provide hard films that don't smear but do not respond to buffing. Waxy polishes leave softer films with slightly lower gloss that can be buffed to restore appearance. Apply moderate coats; the right amount is the least amount that can be applied without streaking. Let it dry about 30 minutes before exposure to traffic. Periodically, usually once or twice a year, take off the build-up of old polish or wax with a remover. Dilute it as recommended, apply, rinse, let dry, and apply a new coat of polish.

NOTE: High heel shoes or furniture legs without floor protectors will cause damage to any floor covering, especially resilient.

HARDWOOD FLOORS

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If you have hardwood floors in your home, you should consult your Manufacturer/Installers guide for care tips. Wood will expand and contract as weather changes, and it may shrink under extreme dryness or swell under extreme humidity.

KEYS AND LOCKS

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Most exterior hardware comes finished with a sealant. Often times this sealant can wear, and tarnishing will occur. To minimize this condition a regular cleaning and clear lacquer application will prolong the look of the hardware. Passage door hardware in any home can work loose through use. Keep a careful watch to avoid excessive play in the doorknob escutcheon plate. In the event a doorknob or privacy lock should become inoperative, it is usually because looseness has allowed the interior mechanism to slip out of place. Removal and reinstallation of the fixture (a simple process) will usually correct the problem. Doors with key-type hardware are more complicated and usually require the services of a locksmith. Periodic application of powdered graphite or silicone spray to keyholes and lock mechanisms can help to keep them operating smoothly.

LANDSCAPING

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The grade of your homesite was established by professional engineers to provide drainage away from the building (and, in some areas, a certain amount of water retention on the homesite). Should you wish to change the drainage pattern, as part of a landscape arrangement, be sure a proper drainage slope is maintained.

When adding fill dirt, do not fill above the top of the foundation and always allow a 6 inch minimum between the earth and any wood or aluminum siding; otherwise, water may enter the joint between the footing and the wall material or cause decay of wood. When watering your lawn, do not allow sprinklers to spray against the exterior walls of your home. Doing so causes discoloration, wall buckling and can cause interior flooding regardless of

whether the wall is masonry or wood. Remember that proper care of the sod or seeded areas of your lawn is essential to ensure adequate grass growth.

MOTORS

Many heavy-duty appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, etc. have motors that require servicing from time to time. Consult the appropriate service manual for care of these motors.

PLUMBING

Your plumbing has been installed by a professional and generally should need only minimum maintenance for a number of years if you care for it properly. If any problem does arise, tend to it promptly to prevent a bigger, and often more costly problem.

You and your family should become familiar with the various water supply shutoff valves in your plumbing system. A good practice is to label each one for easy reference with a tag. Toilet and sink valves are located under the appropriate fixture. The main shutoff valve is normally located adjacent to the front hose bib or the water heater. Plumbing connections should last the lifetime of the home, but if a joint should loosen, your best response is to call in a professional for repairs. If any water-using appliance appears to be leaking, check the drain before calling a repairman. A partially blocked drain can cause overflowing. (See "[Drains.](#)")

Faucets, like all plumbing fixtures with moving parts, are apt to require more repair than non-moving fixtures. The less strain you put on your faucets, the less frequently they need repair.

Cleaning the aerators will be the most frequent task in maintaining your faucets. This attachment to the faucet adds air to the water as it leaves the faucet, reduces splashing, and provides some savings because less water is used. To clean an aerator, unscrew it from the mouth of the faucet, remove any debris, remove and rinse the washer and screens, replace them in their original order, and replace the unit on the faucet mouth. These should be cleaned every three or four months.

Leaking faucets generally can be fixed by replacing the faucet's washer or washers. If you have a washerless fixture, you may still have to replace the control cartridge from time to time, although this occurs with much less frequency than washer replacement. Plumbing pipes can and will make noises at times. It is not unusual to hear water running through the drain pipes between your walls. Expansion and contraction of the water supply lines can make a clicking noise. A loud banging noise when the water pipes are in use is a situation that would require the attention of a professional plumber.

ROOFS

Your roof will give years of service if it is properly maintained. Flashings seal places where the roof abuts walls, chimneys, valleys or where two roof slopes meet. If a leak should occur, call a qualified roofer to make the repairs. If it is repaired as soon as the roofing material has dried, the cost will be far less than if the job is postponed. A qualified roofer should inspect your roof at least every three years. If you have to walk on your roof for any reason, be careful not to damage the surface or the flashings. Be particularly careful when installing a TV or radio antenna; a careless job can cause serious leaks.

SCREENS

Most of the window and door screens in your home are constructed of good quality nylon. They never need painting or other preservatives. A gentle washing and hosing about once a year is all that is needed for maintenance. Should it be needed, replacement nylon screen is available from any good hardware store. It is not necessary to remove window screens in the winter, although many people prefer to do so. (See "[Windows.](#)")

SMOKE DETECTORS

Check your smoke detectors every month. The alarm should sound when you push the button. For your safety it is important that this device be kept clean and in proper working condition. The smoke detector is hard wired to your electrical system and may include a nine volt battery backup. In the event the electricity is cut off, your system will still be in use. The smoke detector will sound off to inform you that battery replacement is necessary.

TOILETS

Never flush hair, grease, lint, diapers, rubbish, facial tissues, etc. down the toilet drain. Such waste stops up the toilet and sanitary sewer lines. A variety of commercial cleaners are made especially for the toilet. Use them

according to the manufacturer's direction, but DO NOT mix them or use them with household bleach or any cleaning product. And never use them in anything but the toilet. If the water chamber appears to leak, it may only be condensation forming on the outside of the tank and dripping to the floor. If water leaks into the bowl through the overflow pipe, try bending the rod holding the float so that the float will be closer to the bottom of the tank. Flush the toilet, and if it still leaks, the inlet valve washer probably needs to be replaced. If the water trickles into the bowl but is not coming through the overflow pipe, it is coming through the flush ball valve. The rods between the ball valve and the flushing handle may need aligning, so that the ball will drop straight down after the handle has been pushed. A worn ball valve or dirt or rust on the ball or the ball seat will let water leak through into the bowl. If the ball or seat are dirty or rusty, clean them: if toilet float is worn, unscrew it and replace it with a new one.

WALLS AND CEILINGS

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Your home has two types of walls, bearing and nonbearing. Nonbearing walls may be altered without fear of structural damage, but alteration of bearing walls must be done carefully to avoid reducing its bearing capacity. Usually, exterior walls are bearing walls. Some interior walls are also bearing walls. The interior walls of your home are constructed of gypsum wallboard, sometimes known as drywall. They will last without undue maintenance for the life of your home. As new homes go through a normal shrinkage process, minor cracks will appear in the drywall. No repairs should be attempted until the room is ready to be redecorated. At that time, fill the cracks with spackling compound (available from any paint or hardware store), smooth it out with fine sandpaper, and then redecorate the entire surface. Except in very unusual conditions, cracks should not reappear.

This normal shrinking will also cause nail or screw pops. The framing studs and the wallboard shrink away from the nail or screw and leave it sticking out beyond the surface of the wallboard. Popped nails do not alter the strength of the wall. The nail should simply be reset, and the resulting dimple respackled and repainted. Also, unusual abrasions may scuff or indent the surface of gypsum wall. In that event, fill the indentation with two or three applications of joint cement used for drywall taping.

The interior walls and ceilings of your home have been decorated with quality paint products. They should give you long service if properly cared for. The painted walls are not meant to be scrubbed. Gentle cleaning with a mild soap should remove most spots. If you have acoustical ceilings they can be gently vacuumed to remove collected dust. They may even be repainted if absolutely necessary, although it is very messy job and should be avoided if possible. The best insurance against repainting is to keep your furnace and air conditioning filters clean, to use the exhaust fans over your range and in the bathrooms, and to quickly vacuum dust as it collects. A word of caution: Be very careful to locate a ceiling joist in which to attach hardware for heavy hanging plants, lamps and macrame. The drywall used in your ceiling is not designed to support any weight.

WATER HEATER

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Water heaters normally collect small quantities of scale and dirty water. This can easily be removed by opening the valve at the bottom of the heater and allowing the tank to drain itself clean. Once you have drained the heater, you should refill and drain again. The rushing water which refills the tank will dislodge any particles clinging to the side of the tank and then you can flush them out. Be sure to turn off the gas and/or electricity before draining your water heater. A water softener will reduce the frequency of cleaning.

All water heaters, whether gas or electric, have a control mechanism to govern water temperature. The dial should be set at 130 degrees for an electric heater and on NORMAL for a gas heater. This is especially important for the proper operation of your dishwasher. Too little heat will cause your dishes to not get clean; too much heat will "bake" dirt to the dishes. Every three or four months you should check the temperature and pressure relief valve on your water heater to be sure the lever works properly. If the thermostat should fail to work, this valve would prevent a dangerous increase in water temperature and pressure. (See "[Appliances](#)" and "[Electrical Troubleshooting](#).")

WINDOWS

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Vinyl windows are fairly maintenance free but the homeowner is responsible for familiarizing themselves with the vinyl window installed in their home and should visit the manufactures website for maintenance of said window.