

It is important to remember the difference between homeowner maintenance (which is your responsibility), and warranty service (which is Critchlow Homes' responsibility). The Limited Warranty lists warrantable items and provides a resolution process if there is a disagreement. As a rule of thumb, remember that any damage or defect caused by neglect, abnormal use, or improper maintenance will not be covered.

Here are some examples of the top five homeowner maintenance responsibilities.

1. **Paint Touch-up:** A paint touch-up kit will be provided for touch-ups needed after closing, or for use in seasonal maintenance.
2. **Caulking:** All caulking deteriorates and requires maintenance, especially in "wet rooms" like kitchens and bathrooms. Caulking touch-ups are homeowner maintenance.
3. **Cosmetic Damage:** Please remember to carefully note cosmetic damage such as scratches, nicks, chips and stains to the Superintendent during orientation. Cosmetic damage reported after closing is considered homeowner maintenance.
4. **Landscaping:** Newly installed landscaping needs regular watering to establish healthy roots. Landscaping that dies due to lack of maintenance will not be replaced. However, there is a 30-day warranty covering death due to transplant shock.
5. **Appliances:** Whirlpool and Kitchen Aid appliances carry a manufacturer's warranty through the Whirlpool Corporation. By law, we are required to turn over the warranty on all major appliances to the homeowner after closing.

Remember, all homes require care and maintenance from day one. Care and maintenance guidelines are more specifically outlined in the Interior & Exterior Maintenance Sections of the Homeowner Manual.

**By caring for your new home and grounds carefully, you will ensure many years of enjoyment. Each and every homeowner's attention to exterior maintenance contributes significantly to the overall look and desirability of your new community.**

## **EXTERIOR HOME MAINTENANCE**

### **Landscaping**

#### **Trees & Shrubs**

The first year is a crucial time for newly transplanted trees and plants, so they require regular homeowner maintenance.

**Maintenance Tip: To help your plants thrive, take care to water them thoroughly and deeply. It may be necessary to water daily during warm, dry months.**

Water new plants thoroughly and frequently in the absence of rain. Roots develop and grow with water, air and nutrients. Light, shallow watering keeps roots shallow and exposes plants to damage in hot weather. Keep in mind that if your home site has a street tree, you are responsible for its watering and feeding, as well as care and maintenance.

## **Fertilizing Trees & Shrubs**

Feed plants twice a year, in March and November, with the appropriate fertilizer. The fertilization needs of a plant will vary according to species.

## **Watering New Sod**

New sod should be kept moist at all times during the first two weeks. On a hot summer day, it may be necessary to water 3-4 times a day for 15-30 minutes each time; on a cool dry day, 1-2 times for 15-30 minutes is recommended. In hot weather new lawns need water all the time. For new sod it may be necessary to water in the hot sun or in the evening when typical watering is not recommended. You can alter this watering schedule with rain, as watering may not be necessary. After the first two weeks, sod should be watered every one or two days during warm, dry months.

### **Here are some tips to make the most of your watering:**

- Water during daylight hours. Morning is the best time because cool morning air will help prevent water from evaporating. Avoid late evening watering, as wet or damp lawns at night are more susceptible to fungus and disease problems.
- Sandy soils dry quickly and need water more frequently. Clay soils dry slower but need more water to penetrate to the desired depth. With clay soils, it may be necessary to water in intervals to avoid wasteful runoff.
- Avoid deep saturation or puddling of water by the foundation. Point sprinklers away from the walls of the house. An established lawn needs approximately 1 inch of water per week.

## **Fertilizing Lawns**

To keep new sod green and beautiful, you need to fertilize on a regular basis. Fertilizing not only helps grass grow, but it also helps prevent disease and weed problems. The thicker and healthier your grass, the less room there is for weeds.

***Be careful with iron fertilizers as they will leave rust stains on your sidewalk and walkways.***

**For best results, fertilize in September and May.**

## **Mowing Tips**

A lawn that is mowed frequently and correctly resists weeds, insects, and disease and appears lush and healthy. A lawn mowed infrequently removes too many grass blades at one time and may result in a lawn that looks thin and uneven.

**Maintenance Tip: New sod should NOT be mowed until well rooted. A lawn may take up to 2 weeks to root sufficiently for mowing, and up to 10 weeks during dormant periods. Walking on a wet lawn can leave footprints that will not go away.**

## **For Best Results:**

- Mow high and mow often. Setting your mowing height between 2 and 3 inches ensures better root development and crowds out weeds. Mowing once a week during the spring and early summer saves time and is less stressful on grass.
- Try not to cut wet grass. It's easier to mow and better for your lawn to keep the blade sharp and mow when it's dry. Wet grass blades don't stand up straight and can cause an uneven cut. Mowing a wet lawn can also lead to soil compaction.
- Practice "grass-cycling." Your lawn provides you with more than one-third of its own fertilizer. By leaving grass clippings on the lawn to fertilize it, you help it grow greener and denser. This method will not cause thatch buildup. Use a mulching mower or push mower for best results.
- Alternate mowing patterns. Mowing the same direction can cause wear patterns and also lead to soil compaction.
- Drainage & Grading

Your home site has been carefully graded to allow surface water to drain away from the foundation. Swales have been provided where necessary along property lines or in locations where natural drainage crossed your property before construction.

**Maintenance Tip: Changes in grade will invalidate your Limited Warranty. Be sure changes you make do not alter established grade and swales. Drainage swales can also be changed by erosion if you do not promptly install landscaping.**

- Normal settling may occur around the house and in utility ditches. Fill depressions with dirt, keeping the fill below the top of the foundation, and at least 6" away from siding to prevent water penetration or wood decay.
- Maintain swales. Sometimes swales are accidentally filled in by homeowners or become filled by soil erosion. If that happens, please clear them out. Every homeowner is responsible to correct the effects of natural erosion and maintain their home site grading plan.
- Avoid unequal soil expansion by watering evenly throughout the yard and avoiding water traps from additional concrete walks, patios, or flower bed edging.
- Catch basin inlet grates should be kept free of debris and sediment. Plugged inlets cause flooding and erosion. Missing, loose or broken catch basin inlet grates need to be reset or replaced.
- Buried drain pipes should be checked periodically and, if obstructed, cleared.

Typically, every home site will see traveling water from site-to-site. For this reason, carefully consider how the features you add may affect yard drainage. It is very important that you do not stop or change the flow of surface water when landscaping, or constructing exterior features such as patios, decorative walls, etc.

**Caution: It is your responsibility to obtain Homeowners Association approval prior to starting work on any exterior improvement projects. Without approval you risk having to remove improvements later on.**

- Retaining Walls

Walls installed on your property have been professionally engineered and built according to all required building specifications. Modifications could jeopardize the integrity of the

walls, which could lead to their eventual failure. Therefore, we recommend maintaining these structures as delivered or consulting with a structural engineer about changes.

## ***Winterization***

- Cold Weather Care

The preparation of your house for winter is an important part of home maintenance. Winter weather can be hard on a home. The following home maintenance tips can help make sure your home is winter-ready.

- Gutters: Clean out leaves and debris biannually.

Consider installing mesh guards to keep debris from collecting. Clogged gutters can cause foundation and siding damage if not addressed promptly.

- Roof: Examine shingles and repair any you find broken or curled. Remove moss with commercial zinc-based moss remover.
- Exterior Water Faucets: Drain water from exterior faucets, called “hose bibs,” and pipes. Remove hoses from hose bibs.
- Landscaping Sprinklers: Turn off and blow out sprinkler system pipes.
- Windows/Doors: Leaks around the windows and doors can be a great source of heat loss; check the caulking and putty and replace as needed.

**Safety Tip: Remove snow and ice promptly, taking care not to damage concrete. Thin ice can be topped with calcium chloride, sand or kitty litter for traction. Harsh chemicals are not recommended as they can damage concrete and landscaping.**

## ***Frozen Plumbing Protection***

During cold weather, please follow these procedures to help prevent water pipes from freezing:

- The thermostat should be set no lower than 65 degrees.
- Remove all hoses from outside hose bibs.
- If the outside temperature drops below 20 degrees, you should wrap all exterior pipes and hose bibs with some type of insulation. (Foam/ cloth tape will suffice.)
- During freezing weather, consider covering vents in the crawl space. Make sure that these temporary covers are removed as soon as the temperature is above freezing.

**Maintenance Tip: If leaving home for an extended period of time during the winter months, take the precautions listed above and drain ice maker lines.**

## ***Exterior Surfaces***

- Painted Surfaces

All exterior wood materials require repainting periodically and in some areas annually if facing more extreme weather. Exterior paint is particularly subject to fading due to sun and weather. Wood trim boards may pull away from each other and require caulking with a good exterior type caulk before repainting. Caulking gaps helps prevent the possibility of leaks and improves the appearance of your home.

**Maintenance Tip: Lighter colors usually require repainting sooner than darker colors. Make sure the area to be painted is clean of dirt, grease and debris.**

Wood trim will develop minor cracks and raised grain as it ages and dries. Much of this aging will occur during the first year. Raised grain can result in peeling paint; however, this is not due to a defect in materials or workmanship. Painting of wood trim and gutters is considered proper homeowner maintenance.

### ***Stained Surfaces***

Certain wood finishes are intentionally pre-stained rather than painted. Stain provides a protective finish, yet allows a natural grain and weathering process. If you don't like the weathered look, you may want to re-stain the material every two to three years.

### ***Mildew***

Mildew is a fungus spread by windswept microscopic spores. When spores land on a surface, they feed either on the material, or on surface dirt. Mildew spores can lay dormant and thrive in warm, shady locations, such as under eaves, soffits or siding and by bushes, shrubbery and trees. During humid or rainy periods, mildew can collect on any exterior area. To the unaided eye, mildew frequently resembles dirt. Mildew may be black, green, red, purple or gray. You can keep mildew at bay by keeping the surface of your house clean and free of dirt or other contaminants that provide a food source. Cut back trees and shrubbery from the house. To clean exterior mildew, carefully scrub the affected areas with diluted bleach and cleaning solution.

### ***Exterior Materials***

#### ***Roof***

The roof on your home will give you years of good service with the proper maintenance. Keep roof and valleys free of debris. Debris can result in possible discoloration and deterioration, which is not covered by your Limited Warranty.

**Safety Tip: Serious injury can result from climbing onto the roof. Since most homeowners do not have proper fall protection, we recommend allowing only a licensed and bonded roofing contractor on your roof.**

Leaks are most likely to occur where the roof joins the roof jacks or vent pipes. These areas are protected by metal flashing that prevents water from leaking into the house. The seal at the roof jack (metal flashing where the vent pipes go through the roof) may require inspection and resealing periodically to prevent leaking. Flashing and shingles should also be periodically inspected for signs of rust or cracking. A roofing contractor may need to periodically replace weather-damaged shingles and repair cracks with flashing cement or compound. Repairs should be completed as soon as the roofing material is dry.

#### ***Gutters & Storm Drainage***

Gutters and downspouts carry water away from the foundation to the storm system. It is the homeowner's responsibility to keep the gutters, downspouts and tight line drains free of debris. Plugged drain lines can cause the yard to become saturated and dampen the crawl space or basement.

#### ***Concrete***

All concrete naturally cracks as it shrinks, dries and cures. Since concrete is placed over soil which can shift, small cracks and minor surface variations are inevitable. In

anticipation of normal stress, we have provided for control cracking, where needed, by installing “joints” in the seams. Minor cracks with no significant vertical or horizontal displacement do not require repair or replacement. These types of cracks are not covered under your Limited Warranty.

A good sweeping is recommended to clean exterior concrete. Avoid washing exterior concrete slabs with cold water from an outside faucet when temperatures are high and the sun has been shining on the concrete. Abrupt changes in temperature can damage the surface bond of the concrete. If washing is necessary, do so when temperatures are moderate.

Your driveway, sidewalk, and garage floor can also be damaged by salt solutions applied to public streets during winter months. Salt residue can be picked up on the undercarriage of vehicles and dripped onto the concrete surfaces. This may eventually cause scaling and pitting. Clean surfaces periodically to remove salted water. For oil spills on concrete, you may try using dishwashing detergent on the spot, brushing gently and then washing the spot using low water pressure from a garden hose.

### ***Masonry***

Masonry is an extremely low-maintenance material; however, periodic inspection is necessary to check for normal settling cracks. Repair cracks according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. To allow for drainage, small weep holes were created at regular intervals at the bottom of masonry walls. These weep holes allow moisture, which accumulates between the interior surface of the masonry and the sheathing material behind the masonry, to escape. These holes must be kept open to allow for proper drainage.

### ***Framing***

Wood, the most versatile and widely used of all framing materials, was used in building the framework for your home. As a natural material, wood will expand and shrink seasonally. You may see exterior wooden framing members crack and separate. This type of minor cracking is not structural. Some separation is normal and is easily repaired by caulking the gap, and painting over the repair as necessary. Caulking and painting is considered a normal part of homeowner maintenance.

### ***Fencing***

It is natural for wood fencing and gates to absorb water, swell, and then dry and shrink. This process will cause nails and other attachments to naturally loosen over time and require occasional re-tightening. Some “curling” and “cupping” of wood is to be expected with exterior fencing as it is exposed regularly to the elements.

In areas where wooden gates and fences are painted or sealed with stain, you must maintain these finishes to prevent deterioration. Many communities have Homeowners Association requirements that require fences to be stained or sealed within a certain time period. Refer to your Homeowners Association for approved community stain colors.

### ***Plumbing - Exterior Faucets***

Because faucets have moving parts, they will need repairs over time. You can extend the life of your faucets by treating them gently. Avoid turning water on and off forcefully. New houses often have dirt or metal in the water lines, which can damage faucet washers.

We recommend keeping a supply of various size washers on hand so you can change washers when needed.

Most exterior faucets are “frost-free” meaning the water shut off is not exposed to the exterior elements, but is within the insulated portions of the home, minimizing the potential of the faucet to freeze.

## EXTERIOR SEASONAL MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

### **Fall**

- Blow out landscaping irrigation
- Clean gutters & downspouts
- Clean yard drainage and debris
- Plant/fertilize
- Prune trees
- Check and replace caulking
- Repair or replace door weather stripping
- Look for damaged roof shingles

### **Winter**

- Winterize: Check valves & disconnect hoses
- Check seals around doors & windows
- Winterizing fertilizer

### **Spring**

- Aerate and fertilize lawn
- Check hose bibs for debris
- Clean mildew from exterior surfaces

### **Summer**

- Exterior paint touch-up
- Caulk columns & siding
- Water landscaping

## **INTERIOR HOME MAINTENANCE**

### ***Interior Walls***

#### ***Drywall***

The interior walls of your new home are constructed of gypsum wallboard or “drywall.” As your new home settles and responds to seasonal changes, drywall will shift, causing nail pops and cracks. You may see this more often around door and window openings where temperature changes are more pronounced and wet rooms like bathrooms which alternate from moist to dry conditions. Rest assured drywall repairs are cosmetic and non-structural.

While it’s nearly impossible to prevent drywall cracking altogether, you may take some basic steps to stabilize environmental conditions in your home and discourage excessive settlement. Try to maintain a consistent temperature throughout, especially during periods of extreme weather. Run fans before and after bathing, showering, cooking and running laundry. Also make sure your whole house fan runs on a consistent basis to circulate air and control moisture.

After the first year of home ownership all drywall repairs are considered homeowner maintenance. Since you will see non-warrantable hairline cracking in the first year and other drywall movement later, it is worthwhile to learn basic drywall repairs.

#### ***Nail Pops***

“Nail pops” are simply nails coming loose from studs, or joists, pushing dried joint compound ahead of them. The result is a bump or blister in the drywall surface.

To repair a nail pop, remove the protruding nail entirely, then install another drywall screw an inch or two above or below the nail pop, sinking it below the paper surface. Cover area heavily with Spackle or joint compound, let dry, sand smooth, texture and repaint surface.

#### ***Drywall Crack***

Drywall cracks are easily repaired in much the same manner as a nail pop. Cut a small “V” joint along the length of the crack about 1/8” deep and 1/8” wide. Fill heavily with Spackle or joint compound, let dry thoroughly, sand smooth, texture and repaint surface. For very small hairline cracks you may be able to simply fill the crack with compound, dry and repaint.

#### ***Paint***

The interior walls and ceilings in your home have been painted with latex paint. While some types of eggshell and satin paint are more conducive to cleaning, please DO NOT vigorously scrub the walls in your home, as this could remove both the paint and drywall texture.

The best time to patch small cracks, chips, gouges, etc is before painting. Before applying materials (latex caulking, joint compound, etc.) or paint, make sure the work surface is free of dirt, grease and debris.



Interior paint is exposed to light and other elements which cause fading and discoloration over time. Paint from the original can may not perfectly match a surface exposed to even one month of sunlight. Therefore, be aware paint touch-ups are sometimes visible under certain lighting conditions.

- **Millwork**

Separations, dings and scratches that occur with wear are easily repaired by filling cracks with wood filler. Many hardware stores carry a variety of products from wood filler to pens and crayons which are meant to match the millwork color as closely as possible and simulate wood grain. To get started, first reset loosened millwork nails with a hammer and nail set. Fill holes or cracks with wood filler (or Spackle if painted millwork) and buff away the excess material with a dry sponge or cheesecloth.

You may notice minor separations at the joints of millwork around doorways, archways, and wallboard due to the shifting framing members. You might consider delaying the repair of minor millwork cracking until approximately two years after closing, when the majority of settling and shrinkage will be complete.

## **Doors**

As seasons change, especially from humid summers to drier winters, you may notice interior and exterior doors that become more difficult to operate. Your front door has built-in features such as an adjustable threshold and strike plate to account for seasonal changes. There are also steps you can take to adjust interior doors. We highly recommend you become familiar with basic door adjustments and maintenance as they will be useful throughout the lifetime of your new home.

- **Exterior Front Door**

If the front door will not close properly it may be due to misalignment of the door lock. To adjust, first tighten the screws in the strike plate on the door jamb. If the door still will not stay closed, it may be necessary to reset the strike plate one way or the other to compensate for the minor settling that occurs in every home.

If you feel air around the bottom of a door you might also need to adjust the height of the threshold to provide a tight fit and to prevent air from flowing under the front door. First, open the door and remove the four small plastic plugs in the threshold carefully with a putty knife. Save these plugs so you can replace them after adjusting. Underneath the plastic plugs will be four slotted screws in the threshold. These screws when turned clockwise will raise the threshold to the desired height. After all four screws have been adjusted so the bottom of the door is in contact with the threshold, the plastic plugs can be re-installed.

- **Locks**

Occasionally you will need to retighten the screws that hold the door locks and handle sets to the door. This is easily accomplished with a screwdriver. A small amount of silicone lubricant will keep the inner part of door locks working smoothly. Graphite should be used to lubricate “keyed” locks.

- **Sliding Glass Doors**

Sliding glass doors are suspended in a frame and slide on nylon rollers. Occasional spraying of the tracks with a silicone solution after cleaning will assure smooth operation.

Rocks and dirt should be removed promptly from the track to avoid damage to both nylon guide wheels and the track. If a door is hard to open or close, be sure to check the track to determine if an object may be restricting its operation. Never force a door, as you may rack it out of square and incur unnecessary repair expense. The moveable side of the door has adjustment screws on the jamb edges which, when tightened or loosened, provide the required tensions for smooth operation.

Small drain holes are located in the tracks and permit water to escape from the track channel. Be sure these holes are kept open; otherwise, water may back up under the moveable side and leak into the house. Although this door is equipped with rubber sealing strips and nylon weather stripping to provide a tight seal, some rain may seep around the edges if hard, driving rain blows water directly against door surfaces.

- **Garage Doors**

Overhead garage doors are subject to seasonal temperature changes and may require periodic adjustment. Occasional slight sticking is normal and even desirable for a weather-tight fit. The moving parts of garage doors should be oiled about once every three months.

If an overhead door is left up for long periods of time, it may warp inward. Adjust the nuts on the metal rods or straps across the top and bottom of the door to correct it.

- **Interior Doors**

If an interior door is swollen and sticking, try sanding the area where the door meets the jamb using a fine grain sandpaper.

Also check for hardware failure such as loose screws and hinges. Tighten any loose screws and check the door for sticking. If the problem persists check to see if the door or frame has shifted or is misaligned. Look carefully around the strike plates and bolt. If there is a misalignment take out the strike plate and file to fit properly.

- **Bi-Fold Doors**

Bi-fold doors are hung on tracks with nylon guides at both the top and bottom of the door. Bi-fold closet door tracks require occasional lubrication to allow the rollers to move smoothly. Silicone spray lubricant or a similar type of dry lubricant is recommended instead of oil, which collects dust and gets sticky.

**Maintenance Tip: Close bi-fold doors carefully and resist forcing shut, as this can cause the guide to fall out of alignment. Adjust bi-fold doors if necessary.**

If the bi-fold door slips off its track, only a minor adjustment with a screw driver is necessary. First get into the closet and shut the door. Look for the guide mechanism and the mechanism's opening. Slide the mechanism up or down as necessary until it moves in the track freely without force. Tighten the lock screw, which holds the guide in place on the track. When making this adjustment, check the other lock screws for tightness and the guides for proper projection into the track. The aluminum track should be sprayed with a silicone solution to lubricate the nylon guide and allow easy operation.

- **Door Stops**

Rubber door stops were installed in your home to minimize damage to drywall from opening doors. However, please be aware door stops are not intended to prevent damage

from a door that is slammed open. Take care when opening and closing doors and make sure door stops are not removed.

## **Windows**

For the most part your new windows should require little maintenance. However, there are some simple steps you can take to ensure the windows in your home operate properly.

- Keep window and sliding glass door channels free of dirt by vacuuming periodically. If the window sill channel or frame gets dirty, you may also wash it with mild, nonabrasive soap and water.
- Periodically lubricate all sliding window and door tracks and rollers. It is recommended that you lubricate the hardware components once a year.
- Inspect the weep holes located on the window's exterior bottom rails to make certain they are clear of any dirt or debris. A soft bottle brush or can of high-pressure air can be useful to clear openings, if necessary. A good time to inspect and clean weep holes is when excessive rain is anticipated.
- Condensation

Condensation occurs whenever warm, moist air inside a home comes in contact with a colder surface such as a window, toilet tank, water heater, etc. Excessive condensation can occur with a large number of indoor plants, steam cooking and lack of fan use. By utilizing your home's ventilation systems such as range hood fans, bathroom fans and the whole house fan you can:

- Keep warm air from getting moist.
- Remove warm, moist air before it can settle indoors.
- Remove excess moisture from the air.
- Depending on the level of excess humidity, a dehumidifier can also be used to help combat condensation.

## **Appliances**

The appliances in your home are warranted and serviced by the manufacturer, Whirlpool/Kitchen Aid or GE. When calling the manufacturer for service, be prepared with:

- Your closing date (the "date of purchase" when your warranty begins)
- Appliance model number and serial number
- Before enlisting warranty service first check to see if the appliance is properly plugged in, and then check the fuse box or circuit breaker. Also follow the troubleshooting steps provided in the appliance's instruction manual.

With a gas appliance, check to see if the pilot light is lit and the gas is turned on. If you suspect a gas leak, turn off the main gas valve near the meter and call the gas utility company.

Here are some other helpful hints for some specific appliances.

- Dishwasher
- Refer to your owner's manual for care instructions and suggestions on the proper loading of your dishwasher.

- Don't let plastic, glass, utensils or other objects fall to the bottom of the dishwasher, as pump damage may occur.
- The garbage disposal should always be emptied before running the dishwasher to prevent leaking from a clogged disposal.
- Be aware that a small amount of water will remain in the bottom of the dishwasher at all times. This is normal and helps to prime the dishwasher motor.
- Interior water stains may occur over time depending on the water mineral content of your local water supply.
- Stove, Oven & Range Hoods

Consult your appliance manuals for specific care and maintenance instructions and for troubleshooting steps in the case of malfunction.

**Safety Tip: In the event of a power outage, do NOT use your gas appliance for heat. Be aware, most modern gas appliances have a safety feature that prevents their use during a power outage.**

Gas stoves, ovens or broilers may fail to light if the burners are clogged. If burned food particles clog the holes, clean them with a wire brush or thin stiff wire, taking care not to push the material further into the holes. Ovens and broilers should be cleaned frequently to prevent build-up of baked on spills.

Clean or change the filter on your range hood regularly to keep it operating correctly and minimize a potential fire hazard. Clean mesh filters by swishing around in hot sudsy water. After rinsing in hot water, drip dry. Clean the underside of the range hood with a damp, sudsy cloth to remove deposits before they harden. Fan blades can be wiped, taking care not to bend the blades. Oil the fan motor as directed in your manual.

- Washer & Dryer

If you are installing your own washer and dryer take care to remove all plumbing connection caps. Check lines for debris and run water to ensure proper operation. Follow all manufacturer installation guidelines carefully.

Consider enlisting the services of a licensed and bonded contractor for appliance installation. Periodically check the exterior exhaust flap for dryer lint, and empty the dryer's lint trap regularly to prevent clogging and minimize a potential fire hazard.

- Garbage Disposal

While a garbage disposal is capable of grinding up most food waste it is not designed to handle all materials. Hard objects, fibrous and greasy foods should be avoided as they can clog and damage garbage disposals. Avoid:

- Cooking grease
  - Fruit pits, bones
  - Corn husks, celery stalks, banana skins, avocado skins and flower stems
  - Potato skins, cooked noodles and rice
  - Marbles, kitty litter, fish tank rock, utensils
- Always use plenty of cold water when operating the disposal to keep the sink drain open and cool the disposal motor. Allow water to run 10-15 seconds before and after using the garbage disposal. Should the drain stop up, do not put "unclogging" chemicals down the disposal.

If the garbage disposal clogs, first turn off the disposal at the switch. You might also consider unplugging the unit under the cabinet or turning off the breaker to the area. Once the power is off, using your hand or a tool, remove the blockage.

**Safety Tip: Always have the garbage disposal switch turned OFF when removing substances from a clogged garbage disposal.**

Some disposals have a special wrench to loosen the blade's circulating plate. Affix the wrench to this connection located at the bottom of the unit under the cabinet. After the clog is dislodged, plug in the disposal, being careful to plug into the correct receptacle on the ½ hot outlet. (The disposal may run continuously if plugged in the wrong receptacle.) If you have turned off the breaker, turn it back on and push the red reset button on the disposal underneath the sink.

- Whole House Fan

Your home is equipped with a special fan, called the whole house fan, designed to circulate air throughout the home. The whole house fan is located in the hall bathroom and looks like a regular bathroom fan. However, unlike a regular bathroom fan, it runs on a timer as well as the wall switch. Most often the timer is located in the laundry room area and looks like a circular dial with metal pins running along the outer edge.

**\*\*Please be aware that the whole house fan timer overrides the wall switch. So if you notice the fan is on and the wall switch doesn't work, you must shut the fan off at the timer.**

You can program the whole house fan timer to run at different times by removing the circular face of the timer and moving the metal pins to the desired order. As the dial turns and catches a metal pin the fan will turn on until the dial reaches the next metal pin and shuts off. Move pins closer or farther apart to adjust length of run time.

The whole house fan is preset to run more frequently upon move-in. You may choose to decrease this run time; however do not disconnect it entirely. The circulation of air is vital to the function of many of your home's systems and is crucial to maintenance.

## ***Plumbing***

Your plumbing system has been professionally installed and inspected and should provide you with years of trouble-free service with minimal maintenance. If a problem arises, tend to it promptly to prevent water damage and avoid additional repairs. Here are some plumbing procedures to be aware of, in the unlikely event of a plumbing leak.

- Main Water Shut-Off Valve

The main supply valve, usually located where water enters the house, controls the flow of your entire system. It will be specifically pointed out during your homeowner orientation. Make sure everyone in your household knows how to turn it off in an emergency.

- Fixture Shut-Off Valves

Intake valves for fixtures are located nearby, usually behind the toilet, under the sink, etc. Turn off the water supply at this point if the specific fixture leaks or when making repairs.

- Leaks

If you discover an active leak, turn off the water supply at the nearest intake valve. If the leak is in your yard or garage, turn off the water at the meter. Minimize damage by mopping water, extracting it with a shop vacuum, catching it in a bucket, pulling up carpets to dry, etc.

- Clogged Drains

You can help prevent drains from clogging by keeping hair and other debris out. But, if a clog occurs, first use a plunger. The rubber cup of the plunger must cover the drain opening, with water above the level of the cup. Rhythmically work the plunger up and down 10 to 20 times to build up pressure in the pipe. On sinks, cover the overflow using an old rag, and, if it is a double sink, close up the other drain prior to plunging.

If a plunger doesn't work you can try a plumber's snake, available at hardware or plumbing stores. The snake may loosen the debris enough to pass through the pipes, or the debris may attach itself to the end of the snake. Turn the handle of the snake in the same direction when removing it as when you inserted it to keep any material from dropping loose on the way up.

**Maintenance Tip: The first place to look for a stopped up drain is in the p-trap. This curved pipe serves as a water barrier to block sewer gas. If you have fixtures that are used infrequently, it is a good idea to run water through periodically. This will keep the water barrier intact.**

- Faucets

Aerators are attached to the ends of faucets in kitchens and bathrooms to reduce splashing and cut back on water use. They collect bits of debris from the water supply and need periodic cleaning. Simply unscrew the aerator from the end of the faucet, rinse washers and screens to remove debris, and replace them in their original order.

**Maintenance Tip: You can extend the life of your faucets by treating them gently. Avoid excessive force when turning water on and off.**

If your faucet leaks you can most often fix it by replacing washers, but single-control faucets may need the cartridge replaced. You can find washers at hardware stores, but you may have to go to a plumbing supply store for a replacement cartridge.

- Toilets

New "water saver" toilets use less water than the toilets of yesteryear. Be aware you may need to flush more than once. Single-ply toilet tissue is recommended. Refrain from disposing of other items in the toilet, even if the items are identified as "flushable" by the manufacturer.

**Maintenance Tip: Leave-in toilet cleaning tablets can erode internal toilet mechanics over time and should be avoided.**

A toilet that doesn't flush properly or runs may need a simple water level adjustment. To adjust, remove the tank top lid carefully and adjust the float by either freeing it from binding or adjusting the float screw until the proper water level is achieved. In time, you may need to clean the ball seat of rust or dirt and replace the ball or intake valve washer.

- Fixtures & Finishes

China and porcelain surfaces will chip if hit by a heavy or sharp object and can be scratched or dulled by scraping or banging of metal utensils. Once a surface is scratched or nicked, the finish is more likely to stain, and it becomes increasingly harder to restore the luster.

All glass used in bathtub and shower enclosures is tempered safety glass. Slight imperfections can be found in rough rolled glass, such as bubbles, streaks, tear drops, runs and similar markings.

- **Supply Lines & Water Pressure**

Plumbing pipes are highly resistant to rust and corrosion and should last a lifetime. If a leak in the system should occur around a loose or damaged joint, contact a plumber. We recommend not trying to repair the leak yourself.

In areas where water pressure is high, regulators are installed to reduce the pressure and protect appliances and internal plumbing such as dishwashers, washing machines, etc. It is very important that you **DO NOT** adjust the pressure regulator.

- **Frozen Plumbing Prevention**

When temperatures are below freezing, you will want to take preventive measures to keep your plumbing in good working order.

- **Insulate Exposed Pipes and Faucets –**

Disconnect garden hoses from outdoor faucets and store for the winter. Consider wrapping pipes and faucets in unheated areas. Also consider covering crawl space vents to prevent circulation of cold air.

- **Indoor Precautions** – Do not allow indoor temperatures to drop below 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Locate the faucet furthest from the main shut-off valve and turn cold water on to just a trickle. This keeps water moving through your system and helps prevent freezing. Be aware this will increase your water bill, however.
- **If the Pipes Freeze** – Once the pipes are thawed, rewrap the pipes with dry insulating material to prevent refreezing. Methods of thawing pipes that require an open flame are extremely dangerous and should be avoided.
- **If the Pipes Burst** – Turn off the main shut-off valve to control flooding and prevent further damage.
- **Crawl Space**

The crawl space is the open area between the ground, foundation walls, and first floor joists. All crawl spaces are ventilated to help evaporate moisture and prevent mildew. The dirt of the crawl space is covered with a moisture barrier, called Visqueen, designed to keep moisture away from wood framing.

Dampness under the Visqueen is common and it means the Visqueen is doing its job by keeping moisture below. The crawl space is also graded to allow any ground water or seepage to exit through a positive drain. If there is ever standing water below the vapor barrier, peel back the Visqueen and dig a trench from the standing water to the positive drain.

In order to protect your home from mildew, it is important that the vapor barrier is kept in good repair and the crawl vents are unobstructed. Your crawl space is not intended to be

a storage area. Items placed in the crawl space will hold moisture above the moisture barrier and can cause future damage.

## **Electrical**

Your new home has been wired to meet code and safety standards. Ordinarily, small household appliances can be plugged into any electrical outlet without fear of overloading a circuit. However, the use of larger appliances, or simultaneous use of several small appliances on the same circuit may cause an overload and trip a circuit breaker. Only a licensed electrician should be allowed to make any repair or modification to your electrical system. We recommend never attempting a repair yourself. There are, however, simple steps to follow in diagnosing a problem.

- **Circuit Breakers**

Your electrical wiring is protected by circuit breakers located in the main panel. The main circuit breaker is located in the electrical service panel along with numerous smaller circuit breakers. On the inside lid of the breaker box you will find a description of which circuit breakers control the various rooms and appliances in your home. Circuit breakers which have “tripped” should be reset by first switching the breaker to the full “OFF” position, then fully back to the “ON” position. There will be an audible click. If the circuit breaker trips again, attempt to locate the cause and correct.

Other causes of circuit breaker tripping are:

- (1) worn cords or defective plug connections;
- (2) defects within an appliance; (3) starting an electrical motor (motors require more current to start than they require when operating); (4) outlet exposed to moisture.

**Safety Tip: Avoid direct contact with worn wires or plugs. If you cannot locate the cause yourself, call an electrician.**

You should check your appliance for a possible short or other malfunction if the breaker continues to cut off. NOTE: Do not plug in large appliances like a freezer or treadmill unless it is specified as a dedicated outlet.

- **GFCI Breaker – Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter** The ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is a low voltage breaker required by building code as a safety feature to control the electrical current to “wet” areas of your home. GFCI plugs are often located in the kitchen, bathrooms, garage, and exterior. GFCI outlets sense extra load on the circuit and cut power to prevent electrical shock. If a GFCI trips you can reset it. The test/reset button is located on one of the GFCI plugs. Push the button “in” to reconnect power to the plug. Most exterior outlets are controlled by a GFCI in the garage. If exterior outlets do not have power, first reset the GFCI in the garage before resetting the breaker.

- **Outlets**

Electrical code requires outlets to have a safety feature which discourages the entry of foreign objects. To plug in your appliance first put the prongs in partially; after you feel the safety mechanism release, continue plugging the appliance in fully.

If an outlet is not working, check to see if it is switch operated. Often these outlets are installed upside down by the electrician to differentiate them. If switch operated, only the upper receptacle will be controlled by the switch.



If the outlet is still not working and is not controlled by a switch, plug in an appliance to see if it's operable in another location. If the outlet is still not working, call Homeowner Service during year one or a licensed and bonded electrician if the warranty has expired.

- **Lights, Fixtures & Bulbs**

Most of the light fixtures in your home are designed to accept 60 watt light bulbs. Larger bulbs generate too much heat and can be a fire hazard. To prevent this hazard, be careful to stay within the wattage rating marked on the fixture. Recessed can light fixtures are located throughout your new home. Do not use bulbs greater than 75 watts. A higher wattage bulb may activate the thermal overload device in can lights and automatically shut down the light fixture.

- **Power Failures**

In the event of complete power failure, notify the power company. If the power failure has occurred only in your house, check the main circuit breaker located in the panel box to determine if it has been tripped. If this doesn't correct the problem, flip the main breaker to the OFF position and call the power company.

- **Electrical Safety Tips:**

- Do not overload a circuit by using too many appliances at the same time.
- Do not modify 3-wire cord appliances to 2-wire.

The third wire should be grounded and used appropriately for safety.

- Water is a conductor of electricity. Always unplug appliances before touching wet fixtures or metal at the same time.
- Never touch a fan, radio or any other appliance while in a bathtub or shower.
- Power surges can cause bulbs to burn out. Power surges are the result of local conditions within the electrical utility.

### ***Smoke Detectors***

Smoke detectors are strategically placed in your home in compliance with jurisdictional fire safety requirements. The smoke detectors are hardwired and have battery back-up. If you hear a beeping noise this may indicate a battery requires replacement.

Rather than replacing a battery individually, replace all of the batteries at once. If the beeping continues this may indicate a problem with the wiring of a detector. If this occurs contact an electrician.

Test smoke detectors every six months to make sure they are operating normally. A good way to remember is to test during daylight savings time. Also give them a thorough cleaning to ensure dust doesn't collect on the cover or within the unit.

### ***Heating***

To get maximum efficiency from your heating system, read and follow all warranty and operating information provided with your furnace and thermostat.

- **Care & Problem Solving**

If you experience a total loss of heat, check the circuit breaker to be certain it is in the full "ON" position. A tripped breaker must be turned all the way off then back on to reset. Also check to make sure the switch next to the furnace is on. The thermostat switch must

be on “heat” and the fan switch should be on “auto.” If you go through this list with no success, a licensed and bonded heating contractor.

**Maintenance Tip: Replace the furnace filter every three months to ensure maximum efficiency and maintain air quality. Consider having your heating system inspected and cleaned at least once a year by a professional.**

- Fireplace

Gas fireplaces require more troubleshooting knowledge as this fireplace relies on the supply of natural gas to ignite a flame. Familiarize yourself with how to turn the gas supply on/off, and how to light the pilot light.

Please familiarize yourself with the main gas feed line. If the fireplace is running and you don’t want to reach under the fireplace to shut off the gas, there is a metal handle located in the floor next to your fireplace. This valve when turned closes off the gas line. Use this valve if you need to shut off the gas quickly while the fireplace is on in order to avoid direct contact with the fireplace. You will most often shut your fireplace off by turning the wall switch off.

On a new gas fireplace there is a curing time or burn-in time when the oils, etc. from manufacturing are released. To speed up this process burn the fireplace three hours; completely cool down the fireplace, remove the glass and clean it with specialty fireplace glass cleaner; replace the glass and continue to burn the fireplace an additional 9-21 hours. (Make sure you re-latch the glass so it is securely fastened on your fireplace.) If necessary, open a window to release any odor during this process. This should help eliminate the manufacturing smell on a new fireplace.

- Water Heater

Your home has been supplied with a quality water heater with sensitive thermostatic controls. We have set the controls as required by code to prevent accidental scalding and to conserve energy. The temperature of your water heater is preset at the factory and may range from 125 to 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Lower temperatures are recommended for homes with small children. However, please note that setting the temperature below 125 degrees Fahrenheit may interfere with the proper functioning of your dishwasher.

Once your hot water heater is set at the desired temperature, keep adjustments to a minimum. Recovery time for hot water takes longer in winter months since water entering your heater is colder during winter.

Your hot water heater may be heated by natural gas. If the pilot fails to light, follow instructions printed on the water heater, call the supplier or Homeowner Service.

**Safety Tip: Don’t store anything near your hot water heater because it will obstruct the flow of air and create a fire hazard.**

If your home includes an electric water heater, the electric heating element(s) may also be warranted by the manufacturer. Check the manufacturer’s materials provided with your water heater for specific details.

## **Flooring**

- Vinyl Flooring

Take care when moving heavy furniture or appliances into your new home. As a precaution, place plywood or hardboard panels on the new floor and “walk” the objects across the panels. Carpet samples or remnants can also be used for this purpose. Vinyl is not designed to withstand damage from heavy objects and may tear or wrinkle. Tears in vinyl floors are not warranted, and must be noted prior to occupancy.

Sharp edges of furniture legs can also permanently damage vinyl with extended use. Consider using plastic caps, furniture pads or castors on furniture legs.

Tears, cuts and indentations can also occur from high heels, rocks embedded in shoes, dropped objects, unprotected chair or table legs, or children’s toys. Deep burns and cuts should be repaired by a qualified flooring installer.

**Maintenance Tip: Thin “stiletto” heels can seriously damage all types of flooring. A woman wearing ¼” high heels exerts in excess of 2,000 lbs of pressure per square inch. These shoes can dent vinyl floors, hardwood floors, chip ceramic tile, and puncture carpet.**

Vinyl flooring may discolor with some rubber backed floor rugs and with sun exposure over time. Avoid using rugs that have rubber or latex backing. To protect your floor from sunlight during peak hours, full-length window coverings are recommended for large windows and sliding glass doors.

## Carpet

The carpeting in your home was laid by a professional installer as prescribed by the manufacturer. While wear is inevitable, there are some steps you can take to care for your carpet so you can enjoy it for years to come. Proper care is quick, easy and inexpensive.

- Prevent soil accumulation

Clean outdoor mats at doorways to keep dirt from being tracked indoors.

Relocate furniture periodically to allow for even distribution of wear.

Use mats and runners in heavy traffic areas to reduce wear.

Rotate non wall-to-wall carpet occasionally to reduce wear.

- Vacuum frequently

Soil and dust left in carpets are gritty, sharp edged particles that erode the pile as effectively as sandpaper. You cannot vacuum too frequently.

- Clean up spills promptly

Check with the carpet manufacturer to get the proper stain cleaning instructions. A well intentioned but improper attempt at stain removal may permanently damage the carpet fibers.

**Maintenance Tip: Vacuuming will remove loose fibers from carpet yarns. You may see a high volume of loose fibers after moving in. This is normal with new carpet and should lessen with time depending on how often you vacuum.**

Seams in the carpets are unavoidable, as carpet is manufactured in roll widths which are normally less than the width of a room. As time goes by, carpet fibers relax and seams, which may be more noticeable when new, become less noticeable with time.

- Filtration Soil

Filtration soil is a natural occurrence in carpet along the edge of walls, under doorways, around baseboards and heating vents, and along the edges of stairs. This is because the carpet acts as a filter for dust that is circulating due to open windows, natural convection currents and anything that can create a movement of air within the home. Critchlow Homes caulks the edge of all walls to help prevent soil filtration.

This condition may appear over a period of only a few weeks, or it may take months or even years before it is noticeable. The severity of the problem is directly proportional to the volume of airflow and the relative dirtiness of the air.

Carpet filtration soil is much more noticeable on lighter carpets. Regular cleaning and replacing filters in your furnace, air cleaner and/or air conditioner is a good preventative measure. However, some carpet filtration may not be completely prevented.

- **Hardwood**

Hardwood flooring is an investment that, with proper care, will last for years to come. Familiarize yourself with the hardwood flooring manufacturer's care and maintenance recommendations. Often manufacturers advertise specific products to clean and care for hardwood or manufactured flooring.

- **Hardwood Maintenance Tips**
- Wipe up spills immediately. Standing water is the enemy of hardwood; NEVER wet mop hardwood. Always thoroughly dry if using a damp cloth to clean.
- Clean dirt and grit frequently. Small particles can act like sandpaper and can damage the finish on your hardwood floor.
- Control environmental conditions: Ideal interior temperature is 68-72 degrees and 40-60 percent humidity.
- Vacuum with a brush attachment; don't vacuum with a beater bar.
- Lift furniture to move; do not drag across the floor.
- Be aware that high heels can dent a hardwood floor.
- Don't use throw rugs with rubber or vinyl backing without checking to determine if they will affect your floor's finish.
- Direct sun can discolor your hardwood floor. Use curtains or blinds to protect flooring from the sun's intense UV rays.
- Maintain adequate air circulation and ventilation; excessive heat or dryness can result in gapping and splitting, and excessive humidity can result in cupping.
- Hardwood flooring is a natural material that expands and contracts slightly in response to seasonal changes. Minor gaps are to be expected.

## ***Tile***

- **Ceramic & Granite Countertops**

Tile countertops are durable and with reasonable care, will give you years of good service. As a preventative measure you may wish to ***apply a grout*** sealer to the countertop to reduce the chance of discoloration. This sealant product is available at most hardware stores and should be applied soon after you move in.

**Maintenance Tip: Granite tile, unlike ceramic, is a more porous tile and requires sealing with an approved sealant up to two times a year to prevent staining.**

Ceramic tile grout is subject to cracking with the slightest shrinkage of lumber, and it is inevitable that this will occur during the first year. Check grout and caulking every six months and touch up as needed. Eventually the maintenance of your tile counter will require that you remove and replace all grout.

- **Tub & Shower Tile**

Tub and shower tile may also develop separations where vertical and horizontal surfaces meet at 90-degree angles, and where tile meets plastic, fiberglass or other material. This separation is natural and is caused by expansion and contraction of various materials.

It is extremely important that you re-caulk these areas when separation occurs to prevent water damage to surrounding areas, walls and cabinets. Seal any separation or gap that could let water travel and cause possible damage. Caulking that contains silicone works best where water is present.

**Maintenance Tip: Caulk naturally shrinks with time and requires replacement. All caulking is considered homeowner maintenance.**

## **INTERIOR PERIODIC MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST**

### **First 30 Days**

Seal tile & grout

### **Every 90 Days**

Change the furnace filter

### **Every 6 Months**

Test smoke detectors & replace batteries

Check caulking & reapply if necessary

### **Every 12 Months**

Touch-up tile grout

Check crawl space drainage & plumbing

Inspect window & door seals (before windy & rainy seasons)

Clean window weep holes (before windy & rainy seasons)

Clean fan blower fireplace debris

### **Periodically or as needed**

Change light bulbs as needed

Flush water heater

