



TAKE CARE OF YOUR NEW HOME

A new house isn't a home until it's warmed by your personal items -- family photos on the wall, your favorite towels in the bathroom and a joyful cacophony of pots and pans, plates and flatware for serving the foods you love. It's easy to forget that a home is also a house made up of thousands of parts, many of which require a maintenance regimen and regular inspection to ensure they are at peak performance, just like your car. Devoting regular attention to maintenance means:

- Preventing damage such as scratches, chips, cuts, burns, stains, gouges and scrapes to the cosmetic surfaces of your home
- Regular cleaning using manufacturer-recommended products and techniques
- Adjusting and lubricating the house's many parts
- Replacing consumable parts, like light bulbs, filters and batteries in smoke detectors
- Understanding and adhering to the manufacturer's recommended maintenance routine for appliances and other mechanical components.

Your new home likely has mechanical systems that are different from those of your last home. Take advantage of builders' walkthroughs to make sure that you are familiar with the systems in your home and understand how to maximize their efficiency for your family's comfort. Know where the main safety shut-offs are for water, electricity and gas.

Building materials expand and contract over time because of changes in temperature and humidity, necessitating ongoing maintenance. Caulk, for example, dries, shrinks and cracks, diminishing its effectiveness until it no longer provides a seal against moisture and air infiltration. Maintaining caulking will be a routine task throughout the life of your home.

Likewise, you can expect some minor cracking in concrete flatwork, such as driveways and patios. Concrete cracks can result from shrinkage during curing, temperature changes or even soil movement. While cracking cannot be prevented entirely, you can minimize cracking by following these steps:

- Maintain good drainage away from concrete slabs
- Fill low spots or settled areas near concrete slabs
- Seal cracks with concrete caulking
- Remove ice and snow as soon as possible
- Protect concrete from de-icing agents
- Keep heavy vehicles (such as a moving van or dump truck) off concrete slabs

Beautiful yards are the result of years of caring and work, and require consistent attention to flourish. But whether gardening is a passion or a chore for you, consider planting native plants rather than exotics for best results. Cover soil as soon as possible to prevent erosion, and always maintain proper slope away from your home to ensure good drainage.

Finally, familiarize yourself with the warranties you receive with your new home, and be sure to activate manufacturer warranties by completing and mailing any registration cards. Besides activating your warranty, this step allows the manufacturer to contact you in the event of a product recall. Retain all warranty documents, and make sure recommended maintenance is up to date.

Few products combine science, technology, art and skill the way a new home does. Make preventative maintenance the hallmark of your home-care plan, and you'll enjoy the full satisfaction that owning a home can provide.