



**WARRANTY INFORMATION**

**SERVICE PROCEDURES**

**HOME MAINTENANCE GUIDE**

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# INTRODUCTION

We at Williamsburg Group, L.L.C. ("Williamsburg") would like to be the first to welcome you to your new home. We sincerely hope that you will enjoy your home for many years to come and are honored that you have chosen us to build your home. We are proud of the quality built into all of our homes and are also proud of our dedication to customer service and satisfaction.

## **Your New Home Warranty**

Williamsburg provides you with a Professional Warranty Service Corporation ("PWC") warranty. In conjunction with this warranty program, we will provide you with an in-depth outline of your warranty coverage and the specific procedures we have established for providing warranty service. We urge you to review this information carefully. However, your ultimate satisfaction with your new home is the result of a team effort:

- Williamsburg's comprehensive warranty service program, and
- Your own ongoing maintenance program starting the day you move in.

## **Protecting Your Investment with a Regular Maintenance Program**

All new homes go through an adjustment or settling process during the first year of occupancy. Therefore, it is important that you as the owner of a new home institute a program of regular but simple maintenance to protect the value of your new home. This program of homeowner maintenance should start the day you move into your home and is particularly important during the first year of occupancy.

In this guide, we cover most items of your home that you need to maintain or inspect on a regular basis, especially during the first few years and provide many helpful tips for maintaining the value of your new home. Although there are many items that you should keep an eye on, very few items require special maintenance.

## **Your New Home and Climate**

A new home undergoes a settling process as it adapts to its surroundings and climatic variations. Except in the most temperate climates a home experiences a vast range of temperature and humidity changes during each year that will result in some expansion and shrinkage of the building materials which can cause drywall cracks and nail "pops" to occur. This will be most pronounced in the first year or so and you should consider delaying major decorating projects until you feel confident that the settling process is complete.

# INSPECTIONS, WARRANTY & SERVICE PROCEDURES

## Emergency Service Procedures

We consider the following as emergencies:

- No heat (If you have a multi-zone system and at least one zone is working this is not an emergency)
- No electricity
- Major plumbing leaks or stoppages (i.e. if one toilet has backed up, this is not an emergency).

If you have an emergency, call the subcontractors emergency phone number directly. However before you place an emergency call, please check the following.

- Heating problems: Check all circuit breakers in your panel box to make sure they are all firmly in the "ON" position. Check your thermostat switch to ensure it is in the proper position (i.e. heating or cooling). Check to see if the on/off switch on the indoor air handler (furnace) is on. Also, periodically check the outdoor compressor (during the cooling system) to see if the fan is operating.
- Electrical problems: Check all circuit breakers in your panel box to make sure they are all firmly in the "ON" position.
- Plumbing problems: If you have a serious water leak, close the main water valve. If a toilet is backing up or overflowing, first turnoff the water supply (the valve which connects the water supply to the toilet). Then using a plunger try to dislodge the blockage. Please note that if the blockage is due to overloading

the toilet with toilet paper or other items, you will be charged for the repairs.

Please also notify us if you have had an emergency so that we can follow-up to make sure your situation has been resolved completely.

For all other service requests please call or email us at your convenience. Once we receive your request we will contact you to schedule an appointment.

### **Inspection Schedules**

The following procedures will facilitate the orderly and systematic handling of service on your new home. Your cooperation with these procedures is greatly appreciated.

- 1. Pre-Settlement Demonstration ("PSD") which will be conducted approximately one week prior to closing** - The purpose of the PSD is to demonstrate the home to you and to answer any questions you may have regarding its operation or maintenance. During this inspection we will also establish the completeness and condition of your home and ensure that all mechanical systems are working properly. Any items needing attention will be noted on a PSD list. **UNLESS OTHERWISE WARRANTED UNDER THE PWC WARRANTY WILLIAMSBURG IS NOT OBLIGATED TO REPLACE OR REPAIR ANY COSMETIC ITEMS NOT NOTED ON THE PSD list.**
- 2. Final Inspection** - We understand that its unlikely that all deficiencies will be detected during your PSD therefore approximately 60 days after closing we will conduct your last formal inspection of your home. We will send you a letter in advance asking that you contact us in order to schedule the inspection. While not required, we would appreciate it, and it will expedite the process, if you would prepare a list of any items which you feel need to be corrected prior to the inspection.
- 3. Balance of First Year** - You are encouraged to contact us at any time if you feel any other items need attention during the first year after closing.

## **Supplier/Subcontractor Service Procedures**

A number of our suppliers and subcontractors have established warranty departments in order provide prompt customer service. At your PSD you will be provided with a list of these suppliers and subcontractors along with contact information you should use to schedule customer services or for emergency service. For all other service requests please contact Williamsburg directly.

## **General Service Considerations**

**Drywall Repairs** - It is quite normal for drywall nail pops, seam and shrinkage cracks to occur after closing. These imperfections are caused by the normal expansion and contraction of building materials caused in part by seasonal changes in temperature and humidity and by the normal settling of your home. These drywall blemishes may continue to occur even after your one year warranty period. Most drywall imperfections are considered routine homeowner maintenance and will not be repaired by Williamsburg unless they exceed the standards set by PWC. While drywall imperfections are not covered by your warranty, if drywall repairs are authorized, and so long as the area as not been re-painted in a custom color, we will paint the repaired area. However there is a strong possibility that the paint will not exactly match the original paint due to fading. Any drywall repairs should be noted on the PSD list.

**Caulking Repairs** - As outlined in your PWC warranty, caulking repairs which are necessary to prevent water leakage will be made once by Williamsburg. Any caulking repairs thereafter will be your responsibility.

**Custom Paint** - drywall repairs will be done as outlined above, but **no** repainting will be performed where homeowners have changed the original paint color or installed wallpaper.

**Remodeling/Decorating** - At some point after you move into your home you may decide to make some changes (for example, finish your basement, add a deck or security system) or do some routine decorating. **PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU OR A SUBCONTRACTOR MODIFIES ANY ORIGINAL SYSTEM OR COMPONENT OF YOUR HOUSE (I.E. PLUMBING, ELECTRIC, OR HEATING**

**AND COOLING SYSTEMS OR IF WALLS ARE REMOVED OR MOVED) YOUR ORIGINAL WARRANTY (INCLUDING YOUR PWC WARRANTY) WITH RESPECT TO THE MODIFIED SYSTEM OR COMPONENT WILL BE VOID.** You will be responsible for the cost of any service calls or repairs to the modified component or system. Additionally, if any modifications cause damage to unmodified systems or components, you will be responsible for cost of these repairs as well.

**Owners Manuals** - Please read all manuals and other information provided for your appliances and other equipment and complete and mail all warranty registration cards. These manuals will be provided to you during the PSD. If any manuals are missing please contact the Williamsburg customer service department.

# EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE

## Lawn Maintenance, Landscaping and Grading

In order to establish a lawn, your lot will be either seeded or sodded. This will not only enhance the appearance of your home but will also stabilize the yard to prevent erosion. Until the lawn is fully established, it is imperative that it is watered daily, preferably during the early morning hours. This is true for seeded or sodded yards. It will also be necessary for you to fertilize and otherwise maintain your lawn and trees on a regular basis. **After you close, Williamsburg will no longer assume any responsibility for the care of your lawn.** The only yard problems that will be addressed are excessive settlement, erosion or standing water.

It is equally important that shrubs and trees are watered regularly. Only trees and shrubs planted by Williamsburg, which have been properly maintained, will be warranted for **90 days** from your settlement date. If, due to the weather, landscaping is not installed until after you settle, then trees and shrubs will be warranted for 90 days from the date of installation.

Minor settlement may occur around the foundation, leadwalk and utility trenches during the first year. If regrading is required in order to fill in any settled areas, your landscaping may have to be temporarily removed. Because of this we recommend that you wait until after your one year anniversary to install any additional landscaping (i.e. flowers, bulbs, shrubs, trees). Williamsburg will not assume any liability for any landscaping installed by the homeowner during the first year even if it has to be removed to make warranty repairs as described above.

Your yard is graded so that surface water drains away from your foundation and is part of the overall drainage plan for your community. This grading must not be altered by any landscaping you install or any other yard work. Swales which facilitate drainage must not be leveled and should be kept clear of leaves, debris, trees and shrubs. Decks, porches, patios, play equipment or other additions must be carefully planned so as not to interfere with the original drainage of your lot.

It is extremely important to maintain the slope or grading of the ground away from your foundation. In a new home this area tends to settle over time. Settlement may cause low areas in which water can become trapped against the foundation. Water entrapment near foundations is a prime cause of wet basements. Consequently, it is extremely important to regularly check for settlement and to fill in any low areas as soon as possible. Further, avoid placing lawn sprinklers close to the house. This may result in the ponding of water along the foundation.

As in the case of settlement along the foundation, settlement may also occur where trenches were dug for sewer, water and utility services. It is similarly important to fill any settlement in these areas as well.

In many cases, tree removal is carefully monitored and controlled by the local government. If you wish to remove existing trees from your property, you should first check with the appropriate department of the local government to avoid any fines that may result from their unauthorized removal. If Williamsburg is required by the local government to remove any trees on your lot, they will be cut as close to the ground as is practical but the stumps will not be removed.

***Before digging in your yard, in order to avoid damage or personal injury, you must know the location of buried electrical, gas, cable and telephone lines. Call "Miss Utility" at least 48 hours in advance and the lines will be marked for you at no cost. This is mandatory under Maryland law. The number can be found in your local telephone directory.***

Pools, saunas, hot tubs or decks installed after you purchase your home are not covered by your Williamsburg or PWC warranties. Nor will any damage caused by these items be repaired under these warranties.

### **Care for Your Roof**

High winds, snow and ice may damage your roof. After heavy storms and at least twice a year, it is advisable to make a visual inspection of the roof for tree limbs, leaves and debris. Loose or damaged shingles should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible. Any damage resulting from severe weather is not covered under

your Williamsburg or PWC warranties and should be referred to your homeowner's insurance carrier for possible coverage.

**DO NOT WALK ON YOUR ROOF!!!** In addition to the obvious personal hazard, you may easily damage the roof. This is true for flat roofs as well. In hot weather shingles become soft and are easily damaged. The replacement of broken shingles and other roof repairs are best performed by professionals.

**It is the homeowner's responsibility to keep gutters and downspouts free of debris.** If they become clogged, roof leaks and drywall damage can occur. Clogged gutters can also lead to ice damming. This occurs when snow and ice melt, but cannot flow freely off the roof and out of the gutters. The trapped water backs up behind the shingles and flashing and can cause severe damage to the roof, as well as the interior of the home. Any damage caused by blocked or clogged gutters or downspouts is not warranted. Gutters require regular cleaning to avoid water damage caused by a clogged system. Leaves and debris should be removed by hand, using a leaf blower, or by a professional contractor.

### **Area-Way Drains & Sump Pumps**

If your home has an area-way exit from your basement it will have a drain in it. This drain must be **inspected regularly and kept free from debris or other obstructions.** Failure to do so can result in a flooded basement.

All homes are equipped with a sump pump. Please note that the failure of a sump pump can result in a flooded basement. If the pump stops running you should first check the circuit breaker to see if it has been tripped. Even if this resolves the problem we still recommend that you have it inspected to determine the cause of the tripped breaker. If at any time you detect any unusual noise or any unusual behavior (such as the pump running constantly or erratically) you should call a plumber as soon as possible. Check the manufacturers' instructions for recommended sump pump maintenance procedures. **Williamsburg will not be responsible for any damage caused by the failure to keep area-way drains free from debris or obstructions or from the failure of a sump pump for any reason, including a power outage.**

## Exterior Finishes

Exterior wood is painted to reduce weathering and the rate at which moisture is absorbed. Exterior paints are chosen for their durability and appearance but will fade after exposure to the elements. Consequently, areas that are touched-up will most likely not match the surrounding areas. Repainting the exterior of your home every 2-5 years is an inevitable homeowner maintenance item. Before painting:

- Clean the surface and remove any mildew.
- Repair minor cracks.
- Let the surface dry thoroughly.
- Choose a good quality exterior paint and completely follow the manufacturer's directions.

Remember that just keeping the wood dry will generally prevent any rotting. Most decay organisms require moisture.

Because wood is a natural product, joints will in time separate due to normal shrinkage. Inspect caulking around doors, windows, skylights and trim once a year. If gaps develop you should fill with outdoor grade caulking and touch up with paint or stain as necessary. Use only quality caulking products that are specifically recommended for the materials being caulked.

Exterior fences and decks should be treated annually with a sealant to prevent splitting, warping, and bowing. Gaps and normal shrinkage is unavoidable.

Masonry surfaces generally need no maintenance. However, masonry walls sometimes develop "efflorescence", a white, powdery substance. This can often be cleaned off with a stiff brush and water. Cleaning products designed to clean masonry is usually available at local hardware stores.

Polished brass hardware and light fixtures will naturally oxidize (tarnish) over time. No lacquer process will completely prevent this from occurring. Manufacturers do not guarantee the brass finishes on light fixtures or on door and window hardware. Acid rain and car exhausts contribute to the deterioration of the finish as the protective lacquer wears off. Unless a problem is noted during the PSD this is not a warranted item.

## **Foundations, Side Walks, Garage Floors and Driveways**

Concrete by its very nature will develop cracks over time. Even reinforced concrete floors, aprons, patios, steps, walks, driveways and porch slabs can develop hairline cracks. Exterior concrete is not covered under any warranty provided by Williamsburg or under your PWC warranty.

If desired cracks in concrete can be filled in. Simply choose an appropriate caulk or Portland cement bond material that will adhere to concrete and re-grout or seal obvious cracks.

Another frequent problem is pitting or flaking of asphalt and concrete driveways and garage floors. This is usually caused by melting snow mixed with salt from cars. When possible, avoid parking salty, wet cars on concrete surfaces. Never use salt based ice removers and seal concrete and asphalt regularly. Snow removal should be done with care to prevent damage to walks.

Stone walls, walks, patios and fences may shift as the ground "defrosts" in the springtime and as the ground settles. This is normal and some movement should be expected. Check driveway and walks for cracks and soil erosion. Fill and mend as needed.

We do not recommend that you seal asphalt with petroleum sealers. Over time these petroleum-based sealers cause the asphalt to deteriorate. However, if you want to use a sealer, use a water-based sealing product.

## **Winterizing Your Home**

Each Fall you should, at a minimum, perform the following to ensure your home is prepared for the onset of cold weather:

- **Plumbing:** Hose bibs must be closed at the interior shut off and then drained by opening the exterior valve open with the vacuum breaker water release ring in the uppermost position. Go back inside to the interior shut-off valve and open bleed cap on the side of the valve. This will allow water to properly drain from the line to the hose bib. Williamsburg cannot assume responsibility for any damage which occurs as a result of failure to properly winterize your hose bibs.

- **Gutters, Downspouts & Area-Way Drains:** These should be inspected to ensure that they are free of debris or other obstructions. You should inspect for debris and obstructions regularly during the year and not only in the fall.
- **Windows & Doors:** Check sashes and frames. Repair or replace weather-stripping and caulking as necessary. If you have wood windows, repaint as needed.
- **Humidifiers:** Please read the manufacturer's manual for instructions. Call the heating and air-conditioning subcontractors for any further assistance.

# INTERIOR MAINTENANCE

## Condensation

During the first heating season, you will probably notice moisture condensation on your windows and other surfaces directly exposed to outside air.

Condensation in new homes is to be expected and is especially evident during the first heating season. When your home was built, literally gallons of water went into it. . . into the concrete, the lumber, the paint, and so on. When your heating system is first used it tends to draw moisture out of the construction materials. When this moisture laden air comes in contact with a cold surface, such as window glass, condensation occurs. It is important that this moisture be wiped away from the windows to prevent damage to the window sashes. Generally, during your second heating season, your home will have "cured" to the extent that condensation will no longer be a problem. The amount of condensation will depend a great deal upon your living habits, such as the amount of cooking, bathing, washing, etc., that is done in the home.

Ventilation should be provided whenever possible to assist this normal drying-out process by bringing drier outside air into the home. Do not, however, try to accelerate the process by heating the home above normal temperatures; this will only lead to an uneven drying which will exaggerate the effect of normal shrinkage.

## Humidity

During humid weather, lumber will absorb moisture and you may find doors and windows will swell, which may temporarily impair their operation. Do not be too quick to request or make adjustments; when the level humidity drops again, the problem usually goes away. During periods of extreme humidity, you may notice moisture on foundation walls or floors. While it may appear as though water is seeping through the walls, it is actually forming on the outside, since the walls are cooler than room temperature. When the humidity returns to normal, this

condition will disappear. Also, during humid weather, your toilet tank may “sweat”. Be sure to keep this water away from adjoining base boards or wood trim as it may cause the wood trim to warp or pull away slightly from the walls.

## **Smoke Detectors**

Smoke detectors should be tested regularly to ensure that they are working properly. In most cases, even though they are connected to your homes electrical system, the detectors have a battery backup so that they will function even if the power is out. These batteries should be replaced regularly. Check the manufacturer’s instructions for detailed directions.

We strongly recommend that as a precaution, you purchase a general purpose fire extinguisher for each floor of your home. In addition, a fire extinguisher designed for grease fires should be stored in a convenient location in the kitchen. Make sure all family members know the location of each fire extinguisher and that they know how to use them. Inspect all fire extinguishers regularly to make sure they are fully charged.

## **Doors and Windows**

Doors and windows have changed dramatically over the past decades. Instead of wood and putty construction, self-sealing vinyl or rubber gaskets are used to secure and seal windows in their sashes. Exterior doors are generally maintenance free metal or fiberglass.

Regularly check all windows for proper sealing, broken glass or damaged screens. Check weather stripping on doors and windows for damage and tightness at least each fall. The tracks of sliding doors and windows should be cleaned at least annually and lubricated as recommended by the manufacturer. Inspect (and repair as needed) caulking at doors, windows and all other openings and joints. Door closures, lock sets and thresholds should be checked and adjusted as needed.

Installation of any type of storm door over original exterior doors, will void all warranties related to the doors. Extreme heat from the sun radiating through glass storm doors, can cause the exterior door and plastic decorative mouldings to warp and paint to peel. If you do choose to install a storm door, during the summer

months, remove the glass panels and install screens instead. As discussed above, some shrinkage and warping due to moisture/humidity changes are normal in wood doors and frames. Typically, swollen doors/frames will return to normal when the humidity goes down. After the first year the occurrence of this should be minimal. For your own protection, we do not retain keys for your home after you move in. If you do lock yourself out of your home, you may have to call a locksmith.

Be careful not to install mini-blinds, shades, or drapes where the hardware may interfere with operation of the windows or damage the window mechanisms. Doing so will void your warranty.

Garage doors and openers should be kept in good working order. For safety purposes, check all fasteners (i.e. screws, nuts and bolts) regularly and re-tighten if necessary, and lubricate the drive and mounting track in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Cold weather may result in the garage door sticking or only partially closing or opening. Do not manually release the garage door until a check is made to make sure there are no obvious obstructions. *The warranty on garage doors is voided if anyone other than the original subcontractor installs a garage door opener.*

A garage door carries a great amount of weight and children should be warned against playing near a moving door or playing with the transmitters. Follow the manufacturer's instructions if the door or opener needs adjustment. DO NOT attempt to adjust garage door spring tension. These spring assemblies are under extreme tension and can be very dangerous. Adjustments must be made only by professionals.

## **Insulation and Ventilation**

Insulation has been installed in walls and ceilings according to manufacturer's recommendations and the requirements of your local government. Attic ventilation has been provided to cool the attic during the summer and to reduce condensation in the winter. Attic vents should be cleaned occasionally and should never be painted shut or covered with insulation.

Settling or shrinkage may occur over time which could slightly reduce the effectiveness of the insulation. For this reason, allowances are normally made at the time of installation so as to achieve the specified insulation value after a

period of settlement. In the event you wish to work under the roof and you have blown insulation, be careful to avoid disturbing the insulation. *Please note that attic areas are not structurally designed for storage or for use as living space.*

## Wall and Floor Coverings

Most of the interior walls of your home are covered with a gypsum wallboard known as sheetrock or drywall. During the first year, walls are subjected to stress as the framing members expand, contract and stabilize in their new environment. As a result, nail pops, minor cracking, especially in corners and at ceiling joints are unavoidable. These minor blemishes are usually simple to repair with the use of spackling or plaster compound. In some cases, a coat of paint is sufficient. It may be desirable to delay major decorating or wallpapering until the settling process is complete to avoid having nail pops and drywall cracks mar a newly decorated wall.

You may notice that artificial light can cast shadows on ceilings which make them appear to be wavy or uneven. This is also true of some vertical surfaces, but the effect is generally not quite as noticeable as on ceilings. Since drywall follows the contours of the underlying wood framing, which swells, shrinks and settles over time, this is virtually impossible to avoid. Unless the unevenness exceeds the PWC standards, Williamsburg will not make any adjustments. If drywall repairs are needed, we will paint the repaired areas only. There is a strong possibility that these painted areas will not exactly match the existing wall paint due to fading of the original paint. We will attempt to match the original color as best as possible, but we will not repaint areas beyond the repair work.

Before repainting walls, it is important that the surfaces be properly prepared:

- Clean surface, remove mildew,
- Repair minor cracks with spackling compound,
- Reset nail pops in drywall, spackle, sand smooth,
- Let surface dry thoroughly,
- Sand enameled or varnished surfaces.
- Follow paint manufacturers directions.

Choose high quality paint appropriate to the area you are repainting. Do not use acrylic paint on top of enamel or varnish as it will not adhere. We suggest that you use washable paints in areas subject to wear and tear, particularly kitchens.

Do not use floor cleaners containing soap or detergent on your no wax vinyl floors. These will leave a sticky residue that will attract dirt and quickly ruin the shine. Use only cleaning products recommended by the manufacturer. Do not use too much water on your vinyl and tile floors. Instead, frequent vacuuming and dry mopping will increase their serviceability. An occasional scrubbing will not harm the vinyl covering if it is dried thoroughly.

Hardwood floors may have imperfections such as knots, variations of color and grain, which are characteristics of the wood. The seams between the boards may open and close slightly as humidity changes. This is unavoidable and no cause for concern. Sweep or vacuum hardwood floors to remove loose dirt. Never scrub any hardwood floors with soap and water, as this can cause darkening, warping, and even buckling. Hardwood floors should be cleaned using only products designed for that purpose. At some time, varnished floors or urethane finishes, may need to be refinishing. We recommend that this be done professionally.

Ceramic tile, slate, marble, and similar products will require regular cleaning to remove buildup of surface dust, soap and other deposits. Use a detergent specifically recommended for the floor covering. Use only nonabrasive ceramic tile cleaners on tile.

Unpainted concrete floors may be cleaned with 4-6 tablespoons of baking soda per gallon of water. Use only special concrete sealer or paints on concrete floors.

Carpet maintenance requires regular vacuuming and the prompt removal of spots for longevity. If carpets are shampooed care should be taken that not too much water is used. Heavy objects resting on carpets should be periodically moved to avoid matting and permanent markings.

Problems with static build-up in carpeting can be avoided by increasing the amount of humidity in the home.

## Kitchen Cabinets, Countertops and Sinks

The finish on your cabinets, when properly maintained, has been designed to keep its appearance for many years. Cleaning of cabinet facings should be done with mild soap and water or special cleaners designed for that purpose. Avoid abrasive cleaners. Over time, due to the accumulation of grease, dust and dirt, cabinets can appear dull. Stains may result from long term exposure to moisture. For best results, select a commercial product intended for high quality cabinets when restoring or bringing back luster to original finish.

Laminated plastic countertops are finished to withstand normal wear, but not scratching, marring or standing water. Occasionally stains may occur that need to be removed. Soap and water may be used for cleaning, but may need to be rinsed twice to avoid film build-up. Abrasive cleaners should never be used. Placing hot pots and pans on laminated plastic surfaces will result in burn marks that cannot be removed. Generally, only ceramic tile or granite tops can withstand these temperatures without marring. Some laminated plastic countertops look like butcher-block, but will be damaged if used as a cutting surface.

Before using your Corian countertop, please review the warranty materials provided by the manufacturer to learn how to properly clean and maintain the surface. **CAUTION: Do not place any hot pots and pans directly on the Corian, it can damage the surface.**

Granite countertop surfaces are very durable and require no special maintenance other than regular cleaning with soap and water. Please note that as granite is a natural product, the pattern and color may not be consistent throughout and some minor natural pitting on the surface is normal.

Stainless steel kitchen sinks will over time develop small scratches and wear marks from everyday use. This is normal and unless scratches or dents are noted during the PSD, these are not warranted items. To remove everyday dirt, clean using light swabbing with soap or detergent, rinse with clear water and wipe with a cloth. The following can cause surface discoloration (including rust) on a stainless steel sink:

- leaving wet sponges, cloths or rubber mats in sink
- using ordinary steel wool to clean the sink
- leaving metal utensils or pots and pans sitting in sink
- allowing acidic or foods high in salt content (i.e. mustard, vinegar, mayonnaise, lemon juice) to sit in sink
- using strong bleaches in the sink

## Bathrooms

Bathroom fixtures may be made out of china, enameled cast iron, fiberglass, cultured marble, or other manmade products. Regular cleaning prevents soap scum build up and discoloration. Never use abrasive cleaners and use caution to prevent surface scratches.

Glass bottles or metal accessories should not be placed in or near a bathtub. A dropped glass object is both a safety hazard and potentially damaging to the surface of the bathtub.

**Grouting and caulking around bathtubs, showers and sinks and between ceramic tiles may crack or fall out. This is a critical homeowner maintenance item. Water penetration in these areas can cause serious damage to flooring and to ceilings below the bathroom. A periodic inspection and, as necessary, re-grouting and caulking of these areas should prevent costly repairs. Sealing grout with a silicone based sealer is recommended. In the first year, as your home settles, inspections should be more frequent. Unless noted during the PSD, this is not a warranted item and any damage caused by the failure to properly maintain caulking and grouting will not be repaired by Williamsburg.**

Specialties, such as mirrors, medicine cabinets, shower doors, tub enclosures and skylights are manufactured to perform and function with little maintenance. Normal cleaning is generally all that is required. For safety reasons, it is recommended that fasteners be checked occasionally to make sure that they are tight and mounted securely. Normal use of enclosures may occasionally require door and track adjustments to ensure long lasting and effective service.

## Plumbing and Drains

In the unlikely event that a water line breaks, the main water supply should be shut off immediately. Make sure that this valve is clearly marked and that all members of your family know how to shut it off.

We recommend that you regularly check all water supply lines to sinks, toilets and clothes washer to make sure they are tight and are not leaking. Faucet aerators and spays nozzles should be cleaned regularly as well.

The best way to avoid plumbing repairs is to avoid discarding anything into sinks and toilet bowls which may cause clogs. Do not pour grease down your drains and remove hair and lint from sinks to avoid clogging. Do not use lye or its derivatives in plastic piping.

The drain from your dishwasher may empty into your garbage disposal. Do not let food accumulate in the garbage disposal as any blockage may overflow the sink when operating your dishwasher. If your garbage disposal becomes blocked when grinding food, consult the manufacturer's maintenance manuals. Usually, there will be a reset button on the unit and a wrench supplied with it. This will fix most blockage problems. To properly maintain your garbage disposal:

- Do not load disposal before starting it.
- Use cold water at all times when the disposal is operating.
- Grind ice cubes to clean it, lemon peels to deodorize it.
- Read your maintenance manual.

If your toilet runs continuously, remove the cover from the water tank. Usually, this is caused by water running into the overflow pipe. Bend or adjust the rod that holds the floating bulb down slightly. If the bulb, once the rod is bent, interferes with the valve on the bottom of the tank, extend the rod by releasing the set screw. Notice the water level line at the back of the tank. For proper operation, the water should be reasonably close to this line when the tank stops filling.

## **Well Water Safety**

If you get your drinking water from a private well, at some point in time you may need to have it tested. Shallow wells (less than 50 feet deep) are the ones most likely to be contaminated, but even deeper wells may have problems.

What might be in the Water?

- **Microorganisms:** Bacteria from human and animal waste are a sign of unsanitary conditions. They may also signal the presence of more dangerous bacteria, viruses, or parasites.
- **Organic chemicals:** Pesticides, industrial solvents, gasoline, and other pollutants may get into the drinking water.

- Nitrate: Fertilizers and sewage contribute to nitrate in the water. Nitrate may cause a rare form of anemia in infants. It also may be a sign of other water problems.
- Lead: Although lead solder was banned in 1986, lead may be present in fixtures. Some plumbers continue to use lead solder despite the ban. Lead can affect anyone, but it is most dangerous to pregnant women, infants and children.
- Iron from natural deposits or galvanized pipes can stain fixtures and have an unpleasant taste, but there are no adverse health effects.
- Copper: Your fixtures may be stained blue/green if you have copper pipes. This is a sign of corrosive water supply.

Consider testing your water if:

- You live near a chemical plant or agricultural area;
- You note a change in your water's color, taste, or smell;
- Your water or fixtures are discolored (red, brown, green);
- Laundry or dishes become stained; or
- Pipes or fixtures become corroded.

Laboratories certified to test water in the state of Maryland can perform the tests you need. Laboratories are listed in the Yellow Pages under "Laboratories, Testing".

- Use only a laboratory which is certified by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Laboratory Administration or by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.
- Do not rely on tests by a company which sells water treatment equipment.
- If a test show that expensive corrective work needs to be done, get a second test before doing anything.
- Your local health department will interpret your test results if you are unsure of their meaning.

How can health problems be prevented?

- Always use cold water for cooking or drinking and to mix juice or infant formula. Water from the hot water faucet may contain too much copper or lead.
- Before using water which has been standing in the pipes for more than two house, let the water run until it feels cold (about one gallon of water). You can use this water for plants or to wash dishes.

- If you use water to make infant formula or juice for babies under six months old, have your water tested for nitrates. If nitrates are found, do not use it for these purposes.
- Several types of water purifiers are available. If a water test shows that there is a problem, check with an expert before buying a water purifier. No single device can get rid of all contaminants in your water.
- Howard County well water has negligible levels of fluoride. Ask your dentist or doctor for information on fluoride supplements for infants or children.

For more information call one of these numbers:

- Howard County Health Department: (410) 313-2640
- Maryland Department of the Environment: (410) 631-3702
- National Sanitation Foundation (for advice on water purifiers): (313) 769-8010

## **Septic Systems**

Know how your septic system works.

- Thousands of Maryland residents have septic systems to treat and dispose of home wastewater.
- A septic system has two parts: A septic tank and a soil absorption drainage system. Sewage flows from the home into the septic tank, where bacteria decompose the solid particles. Then, the wastewater flows into the drain field or dry well, where it filters into the soil.

Be aware that problems may arise. Septic systems that do not work properly can transmit disease and harm the environment. Problems occur when sewage is brought to the ground surface because:

- The system gets waterlogged after a heavy rain;
- A large amount of wastewater flows into the system in a short amount of time and floods the septic tank;
- Soil in the drainage area becomes clogged; or
- Pipes break or become obstructed.

Be alert of signs of problems such as:

- Sewage odor near the septic tank or drainage area;
- Slow-running drains and toilets; or
- Sewage on the ground.

Avert problems with good maintenance.

- Have the tank inspected and pumped at least once every three years. (Look in the telephone book under "Septic Tanks - Cleaning").
- Know where the septic system is located and make a sketch of the area. If you do not know where the system is, ask a previous owner of your house or seek professional help.
- Keep trees and shrubs away from drainage system.
- Keep heavy equipment and vehicles off the drainage system.
- Properly dispose of pesticides, paint, thinner, and other chemicals - don't pour them down the toilet or drain.
- Avoid using septic system additives.
- Keep garbage, grease, sanitary pads, tampons, cigarettes, disposable diapers, and other objects out of the septic system.
- Avoid doing a large amount of laundry in one day.
- Conserve water when using showers, dishwashers, sinks, bath tubs and toilets.

For more information call one of these numbers:

- Howard County Health Department: 410-313-2640 (TT 410-313-2323)
- University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service (for printed material): 410-313-2707.

## Wood Burning Fireplaces

Your fireplace will give many hours of pleasure and requires very little attention in return. Here are a few tips for the best use of your fireplace.

Burn dry and seasoned hardwood and logs. The best woods for heating are live oak, shagbark hickory, black locust, apple, white oak, honey locust, red oak, white ash, American beech, and sugar maple. To start a proper fire:

- **OPEN YOUR DAMPER!!!**
- Place a generous amount of crumpled, twisted, or knot-tied newspaper on the hearth, leaving some exposed ends for easy igniting.
- Criss-cross small sticks of kindling on top of the paper.

- Set the longest or thickest log across the grate or andirons towards the back of the firebox, leaving an airflow space between the log and the firebox wall.
- Place a second log, preferably a split log, a few inches in front and another log atop the two. Three logs are ideal.
- Place an open newspaper sheet on top of the logs and set fire to it. This warms up the flue and establishes a draft.
- While this piece is still burning, light the loose ends of the paper under the kindling.
- Close the fireplace screen, relax and enjoy your fire.
- If your fireplace has glass doors, adjust the opening or close them, according to your preference.
- **Dispose of ashes only after they are completely cold, not only on the surface, but throughout. Many house fires are caused by hot ashes that are put in the trash.**
- **DO NOT CLOSE THE DAMPER UNTIL THE ASHES ARE COMPLETELY COLD.**

Do not burn Christmas trees, holly wreaths, treated lumber, cardboard boxes or other highly flammable materials which can cause a flash fire that exceeds the capacity of your fireplace or flue system. **Never use charcoal lighter fluids, kerosene, or gasoline in the fireplace.** Most fireplace fires are the result of improper use and not faulty equipment. If your fireplace is a manufactured unit, read the manufacturer's instructions carefully. All fireplaces should be protected with a fireplace screen or glass doors. Children should be warned of the danger of touching hot surfaces on or near the fireplace.

In order to "draw" properly, it is important that the fireplace have adequate ventilation. New houses are built "tight" to prohibit air infiltration from the outside. If your fireplace is not equipped with a specific air intake device for combustion air, it may be necessary to open a window in order to provide sufficient ventilation.

Your fireplace experiences wide ranges of temperature difference. The temperature difference between the inside of the fireplace and the room temperature may be several hundred degrees. Under these extreme temperature differences, varying expansion of the brickwork may cause hairline cracks. This is due to the inherent expansion properties of brick and mortar and no known cure exists.

Your fireplace should be cleaned and checked annually by a competent chimney sweeping company. This will help to prevent the possibility of a chimney fire due to build up of creosote.

### **Gas Fireplaces and Gas Logs**

It is imperative that you thoroughly read the manufacturer's operation instructions.

**WARNING! If you smell gas immediately call your gas company's emergency number or your fire department.**

### **Heating and Cooling Systems**

Filters must be inspected and replaced regularly. At a minimum, they should be inspected every 30 to 45 days, and more frequently during periods of heavy use and in the first year as construction particles and dust filter out of your home. If you have a two-zone system there will be two filters which need to be inspected and replaced. If your furnace has a washable filter, clean it monthly.

In addition to regular filter changes, your heating and cooling system requires, at minimum, seasonal maintenance to be performed. This normally involves lubrication of motors and pulleys, cleaning of heat exchangers. One of the main causes of insufficient cooling is a low freon charge which should be checked when the system is inspected. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for specific maintenance schedules.

Most homes require seasonal adjustments to the heating and cooling distribution system to balance the system. Normally, this involves opening the warm air registers in the lower levels and partially closing them in the upper levels during the heating season and reversing the process during the cooling season. Some systems are designed with zone dampening systems that may also be adjusted for proper balancing. In addition, some systems are designed to allow continuous fan

operation. Do not block registers and return ducts with furniture, draperies, or other items. Again, see the manufacturer's instructions.

Your system was sized based on the square footage of your home and the number and size windows in it. The calculation assumes that window treatments or draperies will be installed.

If your heating or cooling system should stop operating, check the following before requesting service.

- Review your owners manual
- Tripped circuit breaker
- The furnace on/off switch (usually next to the unit) is switched "off" or there is a tripped circuit breaker near the switch.
- The thermostat is "off" or set to the incorrect function (i.e. "heating" in the summer).
- If emergency heating indicator light is "on" refer to manufacturer's service manual (heat pumps only).

Use a broom to remove snow and ice from heat pumps. Avoid landscaping within two feet of a heat pump or air conditioning unit.

## **Electrical System**

The wiring in your new home has been designed and installed to meet local and national codes and safety standards, and is divided into circuits to carry ordinarily anticipated loads. It is a good idea to learn the capacity of each of your circuits, so that you will not over-load any one of them. Avoid the practice of plugging in too many items into one receptacle.

Circuit breakers are located in the electrical box. A circuit breaker works like a fuse, but does not have to be replaced, just reset. It looks like a light switch and when on should point toward the center of the box. If one is not in this position, snap it all the way toward the outside of the box and then back to the on position.

A circuit breaker seldom "cuts out" or "trips" unless something in the circuit is faulty. If it does, be sure you (or an electrician) determines the cause, and makes any necessary repairs. Ground fault interrupter (GFI) circuit breakers are

provided, for your protection, in areas near water (basements, kitchens, baths and exterior outlets). Power failure in one of these areas usually indicates a ground fault failure. Ground fault plugs can be reset by pushing the button marked reset located on the plug itself or in some cases on the breaker in the panel box. Do not plug the freezers or other high amperage appliances into GFI outlets as they are not designed for large loads. Security systems should not be plugged into GFI circuits.

Most electrical problems are caused by faulty lamp or appliance cords, faulty extension cords or faulty appliances. Replace extension cords at the first signs of wear and/or damage. If you experience a slight tingling shock from handling or touching any household appliance disconnect the appliance at once and have it checked for damage.

In the bedrooms and the living room, one or more of the electrical outlets may be controlled by the wall switch. Generally, only the top portion of the outlet is controlled by the switch. The bottom portion always remains "on". If an outlet does not appear to work, try the wall switch.

## **Appliances**

Appliance manufacturers furnish operating instructions and information on troubleshooting appliance problems. These instructions will provide you with valuable information on the safe operation and maintenance of your appliances. Warranty cards should be completed and mailed to the manufacturer as soon as possible so that they can contact you in case there are any recalls or safety issues.

**WARNING! If you smell gas immediately call your gas company's emergency number or your fire department.**

## **Conclusion**

We have given you a quick walk through and general overview of your warranty, our service procedures and the basic maintenance requirements for your new home. We hope you will find this guide helpful.

It is obviously not possible to cover all aspects of every home. It is likely that some of the maintenance routines may not be apply to your specific home. It is also possible that your home may have features or options that require maintenance not described in this guide. If in doubt, refer to the manufacturer's literature or call the Williamsburg office if you have any questions.