Blanket
home warranty

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Hallmark Homes

THE BASICS OF GOOD HOME MAINTENANCE…
FROM INSIDE OUT

Covered with Care

THE BASICS OF GOOD HOME MAINTENANCE…
FROM INSIDE OUT

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THE BASICS OF GOOD HOME MAINTENANCE… FROM INSIDE OUT

Congratulations – you are the proud owners of a brand new home!!

You have decided to make a very major investment. In fact it could well be the biggest investment you ever make! So it is important that you protect your investment and ensure that it can grow in value with the marketplace.

You safeguard your investment firstly with an insurance policy to give you protection against the threat of fire and other damaging events. You make improvements and additions to it over the years to make it truly your home. And you ensure you do the necessary upkeep work, otherwise known as home maintenance, either yourself or by engaging outside experts, to help you to guard against small problems becoming major ones, to ensure you get the best performance from all the parts of your home over their expected life cycle and lastly to keep everything looking shiny and new.
Many of the products in your home come with specific instructions from the manufacturer that must be followed to ensure their smooth operation and to protect your warranty from the manufacturer – be sure to read and follow these instructions.

Blanket Home Warranty has crafted this maintenance manual with you in mind. We have chosen to present the material in the following manner. We will take you through your new home, room by room, as well as go outside with you and discuss what the key maintenance items are that should be done in each location. We will discuss them, where appropriate, under the following types of maintenance work:

- *Cleaning and polishing*
- *Caulking and filling*
- *Lubricating*
- *Changing and replacing*
- *Routine checking*

Throughout this manual you will see references to websites that Blanket believes provide good maintenance tips. *Please note that in some cases these websites are manufacturer and product specific; in no case does the use of such a web site constitute an endorsement by Blanket of that particular product or service.*

The Bedrooms…

The principal item to be maintained in these rooms is the **FLOORS**. If your floors are carpeted remember you can never wear out your carpets *cleaning* them with a vacuum!! Blanket encourages you to refer to this website for all your carpet cleaning advice: www.carpet-cleaning-tips.com

If your bedroom floors have hardwood on them we encourage you to review the maintenance tips at: www.albertahardwood.com/cms/CustomerService. Maintaining indoor relative humidity levels as required by the manufacturer is the most important thing you can do to ensure a long and trouble-free life from your hardwood floor even at the expense of having to live with some excess moisture build up on your windows during very cold weather.

The WINDOWS in your bedrooms require some regular maintenance to keep them in tip top operating condition. You need to do routine *checking* of the window's weather stripping each fall to ensure it is in place and flexible. Don't allow paint to get on the weather stripping.
Routine check as well that any weeping holes at the bottom of your windows are free of debris so they can drain moisture easily; if clogged *clean* them out.
Clean and lubricate annually the window hardware to prevent excess wear of the gears. A good lubricant is a silicone spray!!
Cleaning the glass surfaces! Use a mild soap solution and never use alcohol or ammonia based cleaners as they can cause streaking. To *clean* up the kid's crayon creations or oil and grease will require a mild abrasive compound or mineral spirits applied only to the effected areas.

Be aware that in times of very cold weather your windows here and throughout your home may experience water or even some ice build up along the bottom of the windows. This is normal and is the result of too much humidity or excess moisture in your home. It can also be caused by keeping heavy curtains or even blinds closed in cold weather. When the temperature dips to below minus 15 Celsius, you will need to adjust your Humidistat to pump out less moisture and so help to minimize this buildup on your windows. There is always a trade off to be made with humidity; if you like lots of humidity you will have to clean up the excess moisture on your windows and if you like to have minimal levels of humidity then there is the increased risk of static electricity build-up. Blanket recommends strongly that you use the following table to guide you with optimal humidity levels for various exterior temperatures. Remember to re-set your humidistat when the temperature changes to ensure that balance.

Outside Celsius temperature	Suggested inside relative humidity level
-30	20%
-25	25%
-15	30%
-10	35%
0	40%

The DOORS in your bedrooms (closet doors and interior passage doors) need little maintenance. The passage doors can be impacted by too little or too much humidity causing them to shrink or expand or even cause splits in the panels to occur or have the veneer delaminate. It is far better to maintain proper humidity levels in your home as set out above. Lastly if you neglect to check and adjust the basement tele-posts this can also result in door fitting problems.

If you have **bi-fold or sliding closet doors** there is some maintenance to do here to ensure their continued smooth operation. *Routine checking* is necessary with your bi-fold doors. These doors are anchored at each side with pins attached at the floor and at the ceiling with the pin in a metal track. Over time the sliding top bracket can stick and bind with wear; the bracket can either be replaced or adjusted with a set screw that can be loosened or tightened as needed.

Both sliding and bi-fold doors can come off their tracks over time especially with active children. This means you need to re-adjust the height of the door to ensure it fits in the top track by adjusting the bottom pivot pin to raise the door back up to its correct height for its best operation. The bottom pin can also be adjusted to ensure the door sits upright and square.

This website has a good video on how to adjust a bi-fold door!!
http://www.5min.com/Video/Bi-Fold-Door-Adjustment-3042

Your **WALLS** need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with “drywall” and painted these walls can actually shrink, as the house settles and dries out, about one inch in height (!!!) and so you will often see minor cracking along seams and the occasional “nail pop”. This is normal and your builder will do the repairs, **one time only**, usually at the end of your builder’s one-year warranty obligations, by re-setting the drywall screw into the wood frame, covering it with “mud” or joint compound, and finally preparing for paint. Minor cracking will also be repaired in the same fashion. You need to know that your builder is not required to re-paint the repaired area.

Needless to say painted walls can get scuffed, dirty, dinged up etc. through normal use. Painted walls are easily cleaned with a mild soap and warm water; don’t use abrasive scrubbing pads to try to remove scuff marks in particular as they can dull or scratch the surfaces. Finally it is best not to wash the walls within the first three months after move-in to prevent the premature wash out of paint when washing walls.

The last item to maintain is the **HEATING AND COOLING** in these and all your rooms. Your home most likely has a forced air system using a furnace and a series of hot air ducts (to deliver heat and air conditioning) and cold air returns to maintain the desired temperature. This system is durable and reliable. There is some *routine maintenance* required to ensure the system operates at peak performance and delivers the required temperatures.

Your furnace has an air filter on it to capture dust; it will get dirty with usage and should be replaced according to the instructions that come with replacement filters. Failure to replace them will result not only in blocked air flow but also with the potential of higher heating bills as your furnace will run longer to achieve the desired temperature.

Make sure your air ducts are free of obstructions by removing the heat registers and removing any debris etc that is present. Give consideration as well to once every five years to engaging a commercial furnace cleaning company to vacuum out the ducts.

Adjust the dampers that sit inside the ducts that lead to each register – they are found in the joist spaces of your unfinished basement, within easy reach of your hand, or simply put your hand into the duct opening and feel for it. These are used to balance the system by forcing more or less heat into various rooms.

It is a real challenge to provide the desired temperature constantly to each room in your house. There are a lot of reasons for that such as:

- The location of your thermostat(s). While usually in a central location all it can do is sense the temperature of its location and so it will not be aware that it is providing not enough or too much heat to some other parts of the house.
- The number and size of your windows in each room and the amount of sunlight that comes through them influences the temperature of those rooms.
- The distance a room is from the furnace will influence the temperature in those rooms; the further the room is from the furnace the less likely the temperature will be at the desired level.
- Bedrooms over unheated areas such as a garage or a cantilever will be cooler.

All your bedroom electric receptacles now have **ARC FAULT DETECTION** breakers to protect you from using faulty cords and/or appliances. If these units trip, check all your appliances (lamps, radios etc) and if the trip continues have circuit professionally checked by your builder in first year. After that it becomes your maintenance responsibility.

Let's start with **THE TOILET** itself. Very little should go wrong in the first year with your toilets with the most likely things being a clogged toilet caused by accidentally flushing things down the toilet that don't belong there!! There are a number of good web sites to visit to help you be a mister fixit or a missus fixit. Here are a couple of them we recommend:

www.cidnetwork.com/Maintenance-toilet-problems.htm
www.wikihow.com/Category:Toilet-Maintenance

The main cause of clogged or blocked pipes be it in the toilets, the sinks, the shower stalls rests in the "P" trap, a plumbing device full of water and used to block sewer gas from entering the interior of your home. It can be easily clogged by flushing things down the drain that shouldn't go such as fats, greases, oils, sediments of any kind. Never put noxious or flammable items or any dangerous items down the drain! Make sure the children do not throw toys in the toilet bowl or any other drains!!

Next we look at the **SINK, SHOWER OR TUB AND SHOWER** if they are combined. Once again there will be little to do to maintain these items in the first year other than *cleaning* them. Check out these web sites for some helpful hints:

www.h2ouse.org/tour/details/element_action_contents.cfm?elementID=B07852C1-9916-4A5C-BFEE1
www.bathroomkey.com/bathroom-maintenance.html

With showers and tubs in particular you need to pay attention to the caulking or sealing that your builder placed where two hard surfaces come together such as where the tub meets the tiled wall, the shower pan meets a tiled surface or even where the backsplash meets the bathroom countertop. The caulking is that white or clear flexible material that comes in a tube; its purpose is to prevent water from getting behind the joint formed by these two hard surfaces. Over time and with your *regular cleaning* the caulking can lose its effectiveness, can crack and separate and so permit water to get behind so you need to do *regular checking* of the caulking and repair as soon as you notice gaps or cracks in it.

This website offers good tips on how to inspect and repair both the caulking and your grouting anywhere inside your home.

http://www.home-smart.org/basic_care/section_detail.aspx?itemID=2943&catID=759&SelectCatID=759&cat_1=751&cat_2=759&cat_3=759&ref=2943:BC_I_2

BATHROOM COUNTERTOPS are easy to maintain.
The websites below, while targeted mainly at kitchen countertops, are useful guides for your bathroom countertops as well:

For granite countertops.
http://homeimprovement.lovetoknow.com/Granite_Countertop_Maintenance

For Corian countertops.
http://www2.dupont.com/Surfaces/en_US/products/corian/corian_care.html

For laminate countertops:
http://kitchen-counter-tops.net/laminate/cleaning-maintenance-of-laminate-countertops.html

Next up are your **BATHROOM CABINETS AND VANITIES**; these require periodic *routine cleaning*. Use a mild soap or detergent mixed with water – it's all you need to keep them sparkling! Avoid the use of ammonia based cleaners and abrasive pads including your kitchen sponge that could still have traces in it of last week's scrub down of your sinks. Water spills on the cabinets must be cleaned up quickly to avoid water marks and even permanent staining.

You may find that with usage your cabinet doors will go out of alignment over time. While your builder will make a one-time adjustment it does become your responsibility – just some simple adjustments with the hardware used to hang the drawer fronts and the slides is all that is required.

Lastly as many cabinets these days are made of wood they are susceptible to changes in humidity levels and there is a lot of humidity in a bathroom so make sure you use your bathroom fans to evacuate it and avoid the possibility of your drawers warping due to too much moisture in the air as this condition will not be covered by your warranty. As well remove water spills and splatters quickly from the wood surfaces.
While most commonly found in bathrooms and all exteriorplugs, **GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS (GFIs)**, can be found wherever there is the potential for water and electricity to come into contact with each other and create an electric shock risk for you. A GFI is a special type of circuit breaker created to shut off the electricity immediately it senses a ground fault, meaning the electricity is being directed to the ground outside of the circuit. The GFI is easily recognizable by its 'test' and 'reset' buttons and it should be *checked* monthly by plugging in a light bulb into the receptacle and pushing the test button that should immediately turn off the light. Just push reset to reconnect the power to the receptacle.

Bathroom **FLOORS** typically are covered with resilient flooring (it used to be called linoleum or vinyl flooring) which is a product that knows it will be cleaned on a regular basis! Make sure you have obtained from your builder the particular cleaning instructions available from the manufacturer of your resilient flooring. Check out this website for some good general maintenance tips.

http://ezinearticles.com/?Vinyl-Flooring-Care-and-Maintenance&id=975640

Because it is resilient or flexible in its composition it is possible to make dents in it with heavy furniture and with chairs or even with high heels. It is best to place furniture legs into coasters that have the effect of spreading out the weight over a larger area.

This flooring can also become discolored or faded with exposure over a prolonged period of time to direct sunlight so ensure your window coverings provide some measure of protection. In addition the backing on some area rugs will cause discoloration of the vinyl flooring. Lastly some items like oven cleaners or even foods with vegetable dyes in them can cause discoloration that cannot be removed with cleaners; over time some of the discoloration may fade away.

New homes on the Prairies are equipped with an humidistat that automatically turn your bathroom fans on and off at prescribed intervals throughout the day. Connected to your home's central exhaust system to ensure good ventilation and air movement, make sure these devices are set properly to maintain desirable humidity levels and to prevent mildew build ups in all humid areas of your home – familiarize yourself with and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.

With **the WINDOWS** simple regular maintenance and cleaning is needed, similar to what you do in the bedrooms.
You need to do routine *checking* of the window's weather stripping each fall to ensure it is in place and flexible. Don't allow paint to get on the weather stripping.
Routine check as well that any weeping holes at the bottom of your windows are free of debris so they can drain moisture easily; if clogged *clean* them out.
Clean and lubricate annually the window hardware to prevent excess wear of the gears. A good lubricant is a silicone spray!!
Cleaning the glass surfaces! Use a mild soap solution and never use alcohol or ammonia based cleaners as they can cause streaking. To *clean* up the kid's crayon creations or oil and grease will require a mild abrasive compound or mineral spirits applied only to the effected areas.

Bathroom **DOORS** come in a variety of shapes from passage doors to shower doors to linen closet doors to cupboard doors. We discussed the shower door and cupboard doors earlier in this section! So we will focus, briefly, on the others.

The passage doors can be impacted by too little or too much humidity causing them to shrink or expand or even cause splits in the panels to occur or even to have the veneer delaminate. It is far better to maintain proper humidity levels in your home. Lastly if you neglect to check and adjust the basement tele-posts, this can also result in door fitting problems upstairs.

If you have **bi-fold or sliding linen closet doors** there is some maintenance to do here to ensure their continued smooth operation. *Routine checking* is necessary with your bi-fold doors. These doors are anchored at each side with pins attached at the floor and at the ceiling with the pin in a metal track. Over time the sliding top bracket can stick and bind with wear; the bracket can either be replaced or adjusted with a set screw that can be loosened or tightened as needed.

Both sliding and bi-fold doors can come off their tracks over time especially with active children. This means you need to re-adjust the height of the door to ensure it fits in the top track by adjusting the bottom pin to raise the door back up to its correct height for its best operation. The bottom pin can also be adjusted to ensure the door sits upright and square.

This website has a good video on how to adjust a bi-fold door!
http://www.5min.com/Video/Bi-Fold-Door-Adjustment-3042

Bathroom **WALLS** are covered with drywall. The walls surrounding the bathtub and shower enclosure will be tiled or covered with a one-piece tub/shower enclosure. We will focus on tile maintenance; because they are subject to a heavy build up of soap scum, body oils and hard water deposits they need regular and thorough *cleaning* with a damp sponge or cloth and an all purpose cleaner.

Tile grout maintenance is a special matter as well. This website offers good advice on the subject.
http://www.dandminteriors.com/groutmaint.htm

Not only should the grout be sealed as per above you must also do *routine checking* of it to identify missing or cracked grouting, make the repairs immediately and then re-seal the repaired area. Grouting will deteriorate over time and with normal usage. Water will penetrate through missing or deteriorated grout and can cause the tiles to come loose from the wall. If enough water gets behind the tiles you can have a situation where mold will start to grow.

The Kitchen…

The kitchen is the hub of your home. It gets a lot of daily use. Lots of family time will be spent there enjoying meals and good conversation afterwards, not to mention the good aromas that will come from the cooking. Let's take a look at the components here.

Much of the required maintenance that goes on here is *routine checking and cleaning.*

You will have many areas of caulking and grouting in your kitchen. These areas include where the backsplash meets your kitchen countertop, the backsplash itself, if it is composed of tiles, will be grouted in place, your flooring may be tiles and so will have grout between them.

With the kitchen **FLOORS** they are most likely they are covered with resilient flooring. Remember this website for your maintenance tips.
http://ezinearticles.com/?Vinyl-Flooring-Care-and-Maintenance&id=975640

More and more kitchens these days though will have a tiled floor or even hardwood in them. With a hardwood floor you must be vigilant with mopping up water spills quickly. As usual follow the manufacturer's maintenance and cleaning instructions for years of enjoyment. Check out this website as well for maintenance tips.
www.albertahardwood.com/cms/CustomerService

If you have ceramic tiles on your kitchen floor, maintenance consists of *regular cleaning* and ensuring the integrity of the grout between the tiles. This website gives you good cleaning tips.
http://www.fastfloors.com/article.asp?a=47

You do need to inspect the floor grouting regularly and make any repairs to it if it has cracked or detached or come loose, allowing water to penetrate through to the underlying support. Grout can become stained and discolored as well with kitchen spills. Check out this website for maintenance tips.
http://www.dandminteriors.com/groutmaint.htm

The **COUNTERTOPS** in your kitchen will get a lot of use.

Never put hot objects (e.g. pots and pans empty of or filled with good food) directly on any type of countertop – laminate, granite, Corian, whatever, but if you must, first put down some type of protection or buffer between the hot object and the countertop.

Remember to clean up excess water on your counters especially if they are laminate as you do not want the seams to be exposed to it and run the risk of them swelling up and causing significant damage to the countertop.

The countertop and/or it's integral backsplash will show some separation where installed against an outside wall; this is caused by a climatic condition known as thermal bow, the result of an extreme difference in temperture of the wall from inside to out during cold conditions. Your Builder will recaulk this once at year end service (not during the winter!); if this recurs in following years it is considered a maintanance item. Don't forget these websites for countertop maintenance depending on the type you have.

For granite countertops:
http://homeimprovement.lovetoknow.com/Granite_Countertop_Maintenance

For Corian countertops:
http://www2.dupont.com/Surfaces/en_US/products/corian/corian_care.html

For laminate countertops:
http://kitchen-counter-tops.net/laminate/cleaning-maintenance-of-laminate-countertops.html

Depending on the type and layout of your kitchen you will have various types of **DOORS** – an exterior door, garden doors, patio doors, cupboard doors and interior passage doors.

Let's look at **exterior door** maintenance first. These doors are typically made from either steel or fiberglass with a foam core providing some insulation value and they will not warp with changes in temperature and humidity. The maintenance here consists of ensuring you maintain a weather tight seal when the door is closed on all 4 sides of the door. This means ensuring both types of weather stripping are doing their jobs – the door sweep or threshold at the bottom of the door and, on the other 3 sides a strip of foam or rubber attached to the door frame, against which the door snugly rests when closed providing the weather tight seal to stop wind snow and rain from entering your home. Weather stripping does wear out with time and needs to be replaced – best to check it each fall before the winter sets in and replace it if necessary!

You may enjoy an exterior sliding **screened glass or patio door**. Normal usage will cause the rollers and sliders to wear out and need replacement over time. Dirt and debris in the track can accelerate that wear and tear so please do *regular cleaning* of the track. The hardware will also need *cleaning and lubrication* on a regular basis. As they are windows as well they will have weather stripping that needs to be inspected annually for wear and tear and replaced when worn out. The attached screen door can become damaged and warped due to accidental impacts. In these situations the screen door may need replacing.

If you have **a pocket door** it is possible that it can be knocked off its tracks by accident. If off the top track wiggling it back into place should do the trick. As well as the house settles and dries out it may bind in certain spots as you open and close it. It may warp if the house has improper humidity levels and not operate smoothly; a warped door, caused by insufficient or excessive moisture in your home may prove impossible to fix and will have to be replaced. Pocket door maintenance here consists of ensuring the tracks are kept *clean* and free of dirt, etc. and by *lubricating* the rollers.

Lastly your **WALLS** need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with "drywall" and painted these walls can actually shrink, as the house settles and dries out, about one inch in height (!!!) and so you will often see minor cracking along seams and the occasional "nail pop". This is normal and your builder will do the repairs, **one time only**, usually at the end of your builder's one-year warranty obligations, by re-setting the drywall screw into the wood frame, covering it with "mud" or joint compound, and finally priming it for paint. Minor cracking will also be repaired in the same fashion. You need to know that your builder is not required to re-paint the repaired area.

Needless to say painted walls can get scuffed, dirty, dinged up etc. through normal use. Painted walls are easily cleaned with a mild soap and warm water; don't use abrasive scrubbing pads to try to remove scuff marks in particular as they can dull or scratch the surfaces.

The Common Rooms…

There are a number of types of common rooms in your home – the family room, great room, bonus room, media room, den/study, hallways and stairways, laundry room. We are not going to spend a lot of time on these rooms and areas. They are all composed of the four basic components of your home – **THE DOORS, WINDOWS, WALLS AND FLOORS** plus **THE HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM**. The material presented earlier especially in the bedroom section is all applicable here.

There are though some potential new features that we must talk about. Perhaps the most common one is the increased popularity of **laminate floors** in recent years. Check out this website for your maintenance needs with this product. And even though this website states quite clearly to mop up any water QUICKLY that falls on a laminate floor, that point cannot be stressed enough here.

To prevent permanent damage to your laminate floor keep water off it at all possible times.
http://ezinearticles.com/?Laminate-Flooring-Maintenance-The-Ultimate-Working-Parent-Flooring-Solution&id=543555

FIREPLACES are most often found in common rooms though they are very popular in bedrooms as well. With a new gas fireplace it will be necessary to acclimate it to its new home. Also called curing the purpose of this task is to burn off the miscellaneous paints, oils, sealers etc. that were used in its manufacture. It can take as long as a full day to complete this curing; we recommend you do it in no more than 6 hour time periods and do not run the fan when you do this because you want the firebox to be as hot as possible.

It is vitally important that you read your owner's manual carefully and completely to familiarize yourself with all facets of its operation.

SMOKE DETECTORS are commonly found in the hallways of your house as well as close to your furnace. They are easy to maintain – test them no less frequently than once a month by pushing the 'test' button.

The Basement…

The last part of the interior of your home we should discuss is your basement. It was constructed to minimize water build up against your concrete foundation **WALLS** or under your concrete basement **FLOOR**. As a homeowner you must maintain the systems and protections provided by your builder to ensure that water continues to stay outside your home. *Routine checking* by doing the following maintenance items is very important:

Ensuring the backfill up against your foundation walls always slopes away from the house; do not use granular material to top up where settlement has occurred.

Maintain the overall lot grading as established by the lot grading plan approved by the municipality.

Keep window wells (if you have them) free from leaves and other debris.

If you have a sump pump ensure it is in good working order and remove any debris that may have found its way into the sump pit.

Ensure the sump pump discharges its water far away from the foundation walls. Ensure discharge hose is disconected at outside wall during winter.

Ensure the downspout extensions are in the down position and if you have splash pads that they are in the correct position to direct the water away.

Even with doing all these things, your basement walls and floor will experience minor cracking and even some minor dampness and efflorescence may appear after a particularly heavy rain. All of this is normal.
Your home may rely on **TELE-POSTS** to provide structural support for the main beams in the basement and to help transfer the load to the foundation.

On an annual basis you must *check* to ensure the bearing plate at the top of the tele-post is snug against the beam and adjust the tele-post if it is not snug. Your tele-post(s) need to be checked and adjusted regularly during the first year when the major material shrinkage is taking place and continually in areas where soil condition changes are known to occur (your builder can tell you if you are in such an area). Quite often the first sign of the need to adjust can be a hairline crack between a wall and the ceiling upstairs over the main beam. Another way to determine if you need to make an adjustment is to run a strong line along the main beam from one end to the other and stretch it very tightly to ensure it is very horizontal. Then look and see if there has been any movement or deflection in the main beam supported by the tele-post. If yes you will have noted already that it is possible to turn the tele-post up and down! Make any adjustments very slowly (no more than a ½ turn a day) until the beam and your line are both horizontal.

If you want to finish off the basement be sure not to completely box in the tele-posts so that you can get at them in the future if required!! As well do not place your studs so tightly against the foundation and the main level framing because there will be some minor movement that will continue and this tight framing can damage not only your basement improvement but quite possibly put undue pressure and cause unwanted damage to the finishings upstairs as well. Prior to developing your basement ensure you are aware of local soil conditions and good building practices; however the use of a float space berween walls and basement floor and joists is the best practice in all cases

Most likely you will find your **HOT WATER TANK** in the basement next to the furnace. Little maintenance of it is required. It should be flushed out annually to get rid of any sediment buildup.

The short video on this website shows you how easy it is to flush it out.
http://www.5min.com/Video/How-to-Maintain-a-Hot-Water-Tank-19945023

Your hot water tank has a pressure release valve at the top of the tank – do not tamper with it or place anything on top of the tank that could block the escape of water should the need arise.

THE FLOOR DRAIN(S) in your basement need attention simply because they rarely get any! The water sitting in the "P" trap of your floor drains may evaporate if the trap is not used and this can then allow sewer gas to enter your home. Simply make a point of pouring a cup or three of water into this drain twice a year.

If there is a **HUMIDIFIER** installed on your furnace be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for its care and usage. Most new homes no longer have a humidifier as building code changes from a number of years ago require new homes to have a programmable de-humidistat to help you manage the humidity levels in your home by automatically turning the bathroom fans on and off throughout the day.

The Exterior…

Moving to the exterior of your home let's review the maintenance requirements here.

DRAINAGE AND LOT GRADING. The maintenance of the grading pattern around your home is one of the most important things you can do to prevent water from getting into your home. Your lot was graded according to a municipally approved grading plan for normal rainfalls. The purpose of the lot grading is to ensure the rain water and snow melt drains away from all sides of your home either to the street or to a catch basin or a swale (ditch).

Water left standing or collecting beside your foundation can find its way into your home and create serious pressure on the walls of your home under certain soil conditions and in freezing conditions. So it is important that you fill up any holes or areas of settlement alongside your foundation and not with topsoil or granular material. Remove the topsoil and then fill the area with compacted clay. Water will run right through the topsoil or granular material and still fill in the hole!

You must not alter the general drainage pattern approved by the municipality without their consent.

You should not re-direct water onto your neighbor's property.

If you have window wells, keep them free of debris so that they may drain properly.

If you wish to do landscaping and put in plantings close to the foundation, make sure the underlying clay base has a good slope away from the foundation walls. If you install an irrigation system do not install against the foundation wall. If you install xeriscaping ensure the positive dainage away from your foundation and over the entire yard area is maintained at all times as the granular material can retain water and cause soils and water pressure problems.

Complete annual inspections of your grading in the first years of ownership as the land settles and fix any unwanted depressions or grading that is directed towards your house,

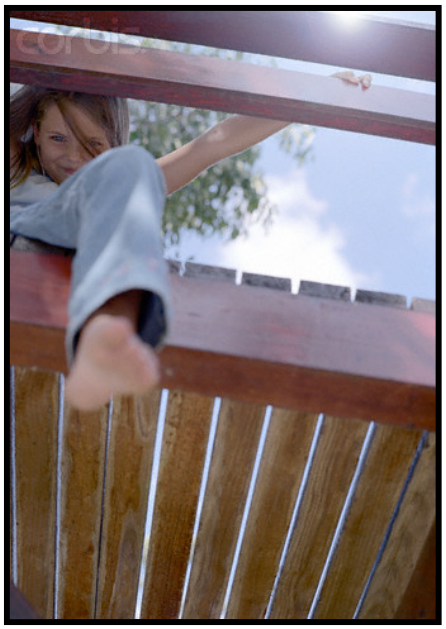
EAVESTROUGHS AND DOWNSPOUTS. Their purpose is to collect water off of the roof and direct it away from your foundation walls. *Routine checking and cleaning* are required here to ensure the smooth and trouble free operation of this part of your water management systems. Check the eavestroughs twice a year and clean out any accumulated debris. The downspouts should direct water away form the foundation. Your builder may have installed flexible extensions at the bottom of the downspouts so that they can be raised when you cut the grass and lowered back down when finished. Alternatively he may have supplied you with splash pads at the bottom – again these serve the purpose of directing water away from the foundation so leave them in place. If you want to remove them to do landscaping, remember to replace them with flexible extensions. Lastly if your downspouts are damaged or bent or dented replace them as the extent of this damage can slow down the rate at which the water is removed from your roof as it can back up.

In cases of heavier than normal rains the eavestroughs may not be able to manage all the water coming off the roof and some may then splash over the sides – this is not a defect.

Remember to disconnect your hose from the **OUTSIDE HOSE CONNECTIONS** in the fall or at any time if temperatures are expected to fall below freezing to ensure the hose connection can completely drain out and not freeze up as this can then split the pipe and cause a major leak inside your home and in severe cases cause water buildup under your floor resulting in serious damage.

Do not disconnect your sump pump under any circumstances and ensure it discharges at all times. Either supply a splash pad under discharge to ensure water is directed away from foundation or a discharge hose to direct the water away.

WOOD DECKING AND WOOD HANDRAILS bear the full force of the elements – sun, rain and snow. This results in splinters as the wood gets wet and then dries out – over and over. This is a normal occurrence caused by the weather. Painted or stained or sealed wood surfaces can minimize the occurrence of splinters so checking these surfaces regularly for wear and tear and then re-finishing them is good normal maintenance, especially in high traffic areas.



CONCRETE DRIVEWAYS AND SIDEWALKS are subject to the full effects of Mother Nature as well and this can result in minor surface cracking and some heaving or settling of these concrete surfaces, all of which is perfectly normal. Remember your driveway was designed to carry the load of the family car or light truck. You will damage your driveway if you allow heavy trucks and equipment to drive on it.

Sometimes the top layer of your concrete surfaces will become pitted or pieces will flake off. The most common causes of this are the freeze/thaw cycles and impacts. As well the placing of some-de-icing products, whether intentionally or not, can cause flaking or spalling of your driveway.
You may wish to consider the use of sealants on your exposed concrete surfaces to minimize the flaking and spalling etc. If you choose to do so follow the manufacturer's instructions completely.

THE ROOF of your house will give you many years of reliable service, no matter what the roof material is – asphalt shingles, wood shakes, tiles, etc. Following a heavy rain or windstorm it is a good practice to do a *routine check* for any missing or loose roofing. If there is a problem identified, attend to it as soon as possible as the roof's prime purpose is to keep water out of your home.

You may experience, on a south or west facing roof especially one that has roof valleys and rapidly changing roof lines, the phenomenon of ice damming. This can be serious as it can result in water eventually getting into your house through the attic. This website provides a good explanation of ice-dams and how you can prevent them.

http://ezinearticles.com/?Ice-Dams---Understanding-and-Preventing-Roof-Ice-Dams&id=1941028

The key thing to remember from this – it is your responsibility to ensure the snow on your roof does not create the conditions that will cause an ice dam.

THE SIDING of your home comes in various types – stucco, vinyl siding, cement board sidings, wood and composite wood. Some of these sidings are painted and the transitions between dissimilar materials will have sealing between them.

Vinyl siding is very popular and very easy to maintain. Simply washing it with a hose and a mild soap should suffice but **do not use a power washer** as it will force the water behind the siding and can cause damage or even leak into the walls

Stucco is another very popular siding application. Check out this website for some good maintenance tips.
http://www.kenyonweb.com/care_maintenance.html
We would add to the hints given on that website that you **not use a power washer** on your stucco as it will severely damage it and rip it off your walls.

An increasingly popular siding is cement board products and they come in the form of panels, planks and even shingles. They are virtually maintenance free; they do need to be cleaned with the hose, a mild cleaner and some elbow grease from time to time – **again no power washers please!**
Wood and wood composite products need re-finishing every couple of years or so this being a function in part of which direction they face with the south and west facing side receiving the full weathering impact of the sun, rain and wind driven rain.

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EXTERIOR SEALANTS AND CAULKING. You must also annually do a *routine check* of the exterior caulking placed wherever two different hard surfaces come together (windows and siding, penetrations through the siding for doors, hose bibs, exhaust fans etc.) to ensure it is intact, it has not separated from one of the two adjacent surfaces or is missing altogether. Where the caulking has deteriorated or is missing, replace it as soon as possible with the appropriate sealing product that can be found at any hardware or building supply store.