

COVERED
with CARE

Blanket
home warranty

Welcome Home!

Congratulations! Your new home is protected by Blanket Home Warranty.

The people at Blanket Home Warranty want you to enjoy your new home every day. As a homeowner you do have maintenance responsibilities to ensure your home remains in tip-top shape and to ensure you and your family enjoys it to the utmost. Please refer to this guide to answer any questions you may have about maintaining your new home.

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Introduction

Congratulations – you are the proud owners of a brand new condominium 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.

The reader of this manual needs to be aware that it has been put together for the owners of individual homes in a condominium complex, be it an apartment style condominium made of wood or concrete and steel. This manual does not deal with how to maintain the common property of the condominium complex. That is the responsibility of your elected Board of Directors. And even though the doors and windows in your suite are most often common property you still need to maintain the insides of them!

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 condo, 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

The Bedrooms

FLOORS

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! About 80% of the soil that enters your home is dry and so is easily removed with that vacuum. Watch for spills and clean them up quickly to maintain a clean carpet. Using cold water will help with most spills. Hot or even warm water may set the stain. If water does not do the job there are many products on the market that can help you get rid of spills quickly; remember to read the label first and follow the instructions on it. As much as possible, use the mildest cleaning solution you can find. Remember, you can always use a mixture of water and vinegar to help you. Lastly, at least once a year, and perhaps more in the high traffic areas, consider either renting a carpet cleaner (available at most grocery stores) or hiring a professional steam cleaner. A clean carpet is a healthy one and a longer living one.

If your bedroom floors have hardwood on them we encourage you to review the maintenance tips supplied by the manufacturer; you may have to ask your builder for a copy of them! Here are some good basic tips:

- Sweep or vacuum the floors regularly so any abrasive dirt will not scratch the finish;
- Wipe up spills quickly;
- The pressure of high heeled shoes or furniture with pointed legs can damage your floor so be aware of their impact. With the furniture, cover the leg ends with felt pads or some other similar product. Do not use plastic casters!
- Protect your floor when moving the furniture around, again to avoid scratching;
- Avoid area mats and rugs that have a rubber or other dense backing, as this can prevent airflow and trap dirt and moisture;
- Maintaining indoor relative humidity levels as required by the manufacturer is the single most important thing you can do to ensure a long and trouble-free life for your hardwood floor, even if it's at the expense of having to live with some excess moisture build up on your windows during very cold weather.

The Bedrooms...continued

WINDOWS

The windows in your bedrooms require some regular maintenance to keep them in tip top operating condition. You need to routinely check the windows' weather stripping each fall to ensure it is in place and flexible. Don't allow paint to get on the weather stripping. Also, routinely check 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. Annually clean and lubricate the window hardware to prevent excess wear of the gears. A good lubricant is a silicone spray! To clean 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 condo 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 condo. 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 is maintained.

Please note these are recommended settings and they may not be the best suited for your family's personal comfort. We suggest you experiment with the humidity levels to determine what level of moisture build up you are prepared to live with. Remember, too much moisture or not enough may void some product warranties.

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

The Bedrooms...continued

DOORS

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 condo 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.

WALLS

Your walls need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with drywall and painted these walls can actually shrink as the building 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 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. Remember your painted walls are NOT scrub proof and you can damage and/or

The Bedrooms...continued

remove some of the paint. 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 and to allow the paint to fully set.

HEATING AND COOLING

The last item to maintain is the heating and cooling in these and all your rooms. Many different types of heating and cooling systems have been designed and installed to meet not only the need for heat but also to work with the ventilation requirements of the Building Code for minimum amounts of air movement in your apartment style condo. There are too many variations to describe in this manual so it is vitally important that you be aware of the types of system(s) you have in your suite and how to ensure these systems always operate at peak efficiency. This means you must understand and follow the manufacturer's maintenance instructions provided to you by your builder.

It is a real challenge to provide the desired temperature constantly to each room in your condo. 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 home.
- Keep bigger pieces of furniture away from the heating devices or registers to ensure a good distribution of the heat and its flow is not blocked;
- The number and size of the windows in each room and the amount of sunlight that comes through them influences the temperature of those rooms. If you own a south or west facing suite in particular you may experience significant heat gain in the colder seasons in your suite that is difficult to control with just the thermostat. Only with some trial and error will you find the right combination of window covers and thermostat adjustment that works for you!

ARC-FAULT DETECTION

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 the circuit professionally checked by your builder in first year. After that it becomes your maintenance responsibility.

The Bathrooms

TOILETS

Let's start with the toilet itself. Very little should go wrong in the first year with your toilets, with the most likely issue being a clogged toilet caused by accidentally flushing things down the toilet that don't belong there! Always have a toilet plunger nearby each toilet in your home for emergencies!

The first rule with a toilet problem is **TURN OFF THE WATER SUPPLY!** Find the shut off valve next to the toilet and turn it off as soon as possible.

Here are a few tips for some of the more common toilet problems!

How to unclog your toilet:

1. Flush once only;
2. Protect the floor around the toilet to avoid damage caused by the inevitable water spills and maybe overflow. Newspaper will do the trick or some old towels, etc.;
3. Sometime adding a few squirts of dish soap into the bowl will do the trick. If not, move to plan B;
4. Pour a half bucket of very hot water from about waist level into the bowl and let it sit for a few minutes. If the clog is not released try it again or move on to the next step - plan C;
5. Use the right plunger. This is a plunger with a ball-shaped end or with a fold-out rubber flange on the bottom. The end must form a seal over the bottom of the toilet so that you force the water when you push down to go down and not back up! Insert the plunger into the bowl and press down firmly and slowly and cover the hole completely;
6. Insert the plunger into the bowl and press down firmly **BUT** slowly and ensure you cover the hole completely and that the business end of it is fully immersed in the water;
7. Pull up the plunger sharply to create suction in the drain, then push back in to create pressure. The suction action is more important than the pushing action because you don't want to jam the clog in even harder. The idea is to disturb the clog with the back and forth action so that it will be loosened and move into the drain and out the sewer.

The Bathrooms...continued

While it is best not to touch the toilet bowl with metal it can happen and it can leave a mark. Here are a number of ways to get rid of metal marks:

1. Remove the standing water in the bowl – the best way is to flush the toilet and turn off the water intake so it does not refill;
2. Fill the bowl with Coca Cola! Let it sit for at least an hour or overnight if that is possible. The carbonic acid in the real thing removes stains from vitreous china;
3. You can also scour the area with a mild scouring powder;
4. Alternately, try using a Magic Eraser from Mr. Clean.

The main cause of clogged or blocked pipes, be it in the toilets, the sinks or the shower stalls rests in the “P” trap, a plumbing device full of water and used to block sewer gases from entering the interior of your condo. It can be easily clogged by flushing things down the drain that shouldn’t go there in the first place, such as fats, greases, oils or 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!

SINKS, SHOWERS, TUB/SHOWERS

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 regularly with mild cleaners designed for these areas.

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 usually 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 and can crack and separate and so permit water to get behind. This means you need to do regular checking of the caulking and repair it as soon as you notice gaps or cracks. At a minimum check all caulking twice a year. Water that gets behind the caulking

The Bathrooms...continued

has the ability to do serious damage to your condo and can result in an expensive repair. Not only do you need to check the caulking itself, it is also a good idea to watch for the ‘telltale’ signs of a water leak in your building – stains or discoloration of your ceilings or walls below bathrooms and kitchens in particular.

When you redo the caulking in any area you must completely remove all the old caulking first; if you do not you increase the chances that your repair will be somewhat less than perfect and that the area will leak again sooner than you had expected. Always follow the instructions on the tube!

When you clean tiles and grout, we recommend a cleaner with a silicone base that will help to maintain the seals in all your grout; this type of cleaner is readily available wherever tile and grout is sold.

We need to address the tile grout that is placed between tiles either in your shower surround, your backsplash or on the floor. Once again, we do not want water getting behind the tiles through gaps, etc. in the grout. Basically, the hints we gave for checking the caulking apply equally well to the grout as do the reasons why you must check it. Do it regularly and at least twice a year. You are looking for areas between the tiles where the grout has actually fallen out, has separated and shrunk away from the tiles or is discolored because it is holding moisture in it. When you clean tiles and grout, we recommend a cleaner with a silicone base that will help to maintain the seals in all your grout; this type of cleaner is readily available wherever tile and grout is sold.

The repair follows similar processes to redoing caulking. You must remove all the grout in the immediate area before you replace it. You do need to pay attention to matching color here as well! Once again, follow the instructions on the supplier’s packaging. Once you have reset the grout there is still one more step to do: you must reseal it to increase its effectiveness as a water barrier.

The Bathrooms...continued

COUNTERTOPS

Bathroom countertops are easy to maintain.

For granite countertops, follow some very simple procedures.

- Wipe up spills immediately
- Use mild soaps or cleaners or just water
- Rinse and dry completely with a soft cloth.

While many granite countertops are sealed initially by your builder, after a few years of good use unfortunately you may experience a stain on your granite. Even though it is a rock, don't place hot pots or pans directly on it – place a pad or trivet in between the two. Here's how to remove many common stains:

How to Treat Stains on Granite Countertops

Stain	Treatment	How to Use
Most Stains	1 cup flour, 1-2 T mild dishwashing soap, create a thick paste by mixing with water	Apply to stain, cover overnight with plastic wrap, and in the morning scrape mixture from stain with wooden utensil and rinse.
Oil based stains	1 cup flour, 1-2 T mild hydrogen peroxide, form a thick paste by mixing with water	Apply to stain, cover overnight with plastic wrap, in the morning scrape mixture from stain with wooden utensil and rinse.
Organic stains	Combine 12 percent hydrogen peroxide with 2-3 drops of ammonia	This should help to remove stains like coffee and tea.
Ink on dark granite	Lacquer thinner or acetone	Apply to stain.
Ink on light granite	Hydrogen peroxide	Apply to stain.
Wine	Make a mixture of molding plaster and bleach until it becomes a paste	Apply to stain for 30 minutes, remove and rinse.

The Bathrooms...continued

For Corian countertops follow the same easy rules as for routine granite countertop cleaning.

Do not place hot pots and pans, etc. directly on the surface as you can damage it and lead to a very costly repair, so always place a pad or a trivet between the two.

Avoid putting strong chemicals in direct contact with the countertop or sink. If a spill occurs get rid of it quickly and completely. Don't cut anything directly on your countertop.

For laminate countertops, those with a thin laminate placed on top of some wood based product such as plywood or composite wood materials, again follow the same easy rules as for granite and Corian countertops set out above and you will enjoy your countertop for years to come. Laminate countertops come with glued together seams in them however, and great care must be taken to keep water and spills off of these seams because, again, over time and with leaving water to stand on a seam it will dissolve the glue, enter the resulting hole in the seam and soak into the substrate below and swell it up. ***These unfortunate types of situations are not covered by your new home warranty***, so please take the necessary precautions to fully enjoy your countertops wherever they are located in your home.

CABINETS AND VANITIES

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. 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.

The Bathrooms...continued

GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS (GFCIs)

While most commonly found in bathrooms and all exterior plugs, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), 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 GFCI 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 GFCI 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.

FLOORS

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; many manufacturers have their own or recommended cleaning products for their vinyl flooring and using a non-recommended product could not only harm the floor but also void the warranty on it.

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 casters that have the effect of spreading out the weight over a larger area. Should the floor be damaged by moving objects or furniture over it resulting in a small tear or cut you must repair these areas immediately to protect them from further damage. Use a small amount of the manufacturer's recommended seam sealer compound and follow the instructions to seal the cut or tear and protect your floor from further damage.

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.

The Bathrooms...continued

VENTILATION

New condos are equipped with an humidistat that automatically turns your bathroom fans on and off at prescribed intervals throughout the day. The humidistat is 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 up in all humid areas of your home – familiarize yourself with and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.

DOORS

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

The passage doors can be impacted by too little or too much humidity causing them to shrink or expand, 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 condo.

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.

The Bathrooms...continued

WALLS

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. One of the key things to do to ensure a long life to the grout is to ensure it is sealed to lock out stains. Choose a sealant that is best for you – there are two main types: one that is a topical sealer and produces a ‘wet look’ and a penetrating sealer that keeps the grout’s original look. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for applying and be sure to be aware of how often it needs to be redone under normal conditions of usage.

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.

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. Remember your painted walls are NOT scrub proof and you can damage them and/or remove some of the paint. 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 and to allow the paint to fully set.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is the hub of your condo. 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.

FLOORS

With the kitchen floors they are most likely they are covered with resilient flooring. Remember, our comments on bathroom floors apply equally here to this type of kitchen floor.

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. Please refer back to the bedroom section of this manual for hardwood floor maintenance requirements.

If you have ceramic tiles on your kitchen floor, maintenance consists of regular cleaning and ensuring the integrity of the grout between the tiles. There are many types of all purpose cleaner to choose from. Choose one that is compatible with grout. Check out what the tile manufacturer recommends first! After cleaning the floor it is a good idea to rinse it to ensure that any excess cleaner does not dry on the floor and dull the finish surface or trap abrasive dirt particles. Use dirt catching mats at every exterior door entrance.

You do need to inspect the floor grouting regularly and make any repairs to it if it has cracked, detached or come loose, allowing water to penetrate through to the underlying support. Grout can become stained and discolored as well with kitchen spills if it is not sealed. See the section above for grout sealing hints.

The Kitchen...continued

COUNTERTOPS

The countertops in your kitchen will get a lot of use, so it is important to take care of them. 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 temperature of the wall from inside to out during cold conditions. Your Builder will re-caulk this once at year end service (not during the winter!); if this recurs in following years it is considered a maintenance item.

Refer to our section above under BATHROOMS to learn how to maintain granite, Corian and laminate countertops.

DOORS

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. With apartment style condos once again it is not too likely your kitchen will be on an outside wall; quite frankly the only doors your kitchen may have are cupboard doors!

If you have a pocket door it is possible that it can be knocked off its tracks by accident. If it is off the top track wiggling it back into place should do the trick. Also, as the building settles and dries out it may bind in certain spots as you open and close it. It may warp if the building 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.

The Kitchen...continued

WALLS

Lastly, your walls need some periodic attention as well. Typically covered with drywall and painted, these walls can actually shrink (about one inch in height) as the building settles and dries out, 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. Remember your painted walls are NOT scrub proof and you can damage and/or remove some of the paint. Finally it is best not to wash the walls within the first three months after move-in to prevent the premature wash out of the paint when washing the walls and to ensure the paint is fully set.

The Common Rooms

There are a number of types of common rooms in your condo – the living and dining rooms, den/study, hallways and stairways, laundry room, etc. 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 condo – 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.

LAMINATE FLOORING

There are though some potential new flooring features that we must talk about. Perhaps the most common one is the increased popularity of laminate floors in recent years.

The number one rule here is NEVER allow fluids to remain on the floor for any length of time – mop them up immediately because moisture is the number one enemy of laminate flooring as it can seep into the joints and swell the core of the planks leading to unsightly buckling, warping and twisting of the flooring. Only use a damp mop or cloth to blot up spills. Do not use water to clean the laminate flooring; rather use the product recommended by the manufacturer of the laminate. If you deviate from the warranty conditions of the manufacturer that include the proper cleaners, you will lose the warranty protections.

Never use an abrasive cleaner on a laminate floor or a scouring pad. Ordinary detergents are often a no-no too because they may damage the top wear layer and void the warranty.

To repair minor scratches you can purchase a variety of color coordinated filling pens to minimize the look of the scratch. Filling putty is available for more pronounced problems.

Use felt pads under all your furniture just as you would with a hardwood or a resilient flooring installation. If you must move furniture across this floor put a rug underneath it to prevent dents or other damage to the floor. If you have pets keep their nails trimmed so they do not scratch the surface. If you or your guests have high heels – take them off.

DOORS

You will have an entrance door to your suite and either a sliding door or exterior grade door to your patio or balcony area(s).

The Common Rooms...continued

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 very much 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 condo. 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; this is your responsibility.

FIREPLACES

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

Smoke detectors are commonly found in the hallways of your condo. They are easy to maintain – test them no less frequently than once a month by pushing the ‘test’ button.

Seasonal Maintenance Schedule

Establishing and following a maintenance schedule is the best way to protect your investment, to ensure that by doing your maintenance you prevent the appearance of future problems and to manage your household maintenance budget. This seasonal schedule of maintenance tasks should not replace any manufacturer’s recommendations. We suggest that you use licensed contractors for any tasks you may feel you don’t have the technical knowledge or ability to perform.

Following a maintenance schedule is also important to ensure your warranty protections remain fully in place. If you forget or decide not to follow the recommended maintenance procedures of the manufacturer of your condo’s equipment or those provided by your builder or these recommendations below, it is possible that any claim you might make for a defect will be denied on the grounds that you did not maintain your home.

Safety First – As a homeowner, you often want to perform maintenance tasks yourself because you can save money! It is important though to bear in mind that there are many areas of home maintenance that are best left to professionals. For example, electrical work or entering an attic are just a couple examples of hazardous activities. It is better to make the safe choice if there is any question as to your ability to perform any maintenance task.

WINTER:

December	
	Check your humidistat to ensure it is providing accurate readings of the humidity levels inside your home to guard against damage to your hardwood flooring and other valuable wood products and furnishings.
	Check the CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms – check or replace the batteries.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
January	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Check your en suite furnace (if you have one) filter and clean/replace if necessary.

Seasonal Maintenance Schedule...continued

February	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Check your en suite furnace (if you have one) filter and clean/replace if necessary.

SPRING:

March: It's still winter out here on the prairies!	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.
	Check your en suite furnace (if you have one) filter and clean/replace if necessary.

April	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

May	
	Check to ensure there are no insects or vermin getting into your home.
	Inspect caulking around windows for cracks or separation from the window or building.
	Inspect all caulking inside and especially outside to ensure it is continuous and intact and touch-up or replace where needed with approved products.
	Clean windows, window tracks and make sure weep holes are not blocked (including sliding door tracks – lubricate openers and track rollers with silicone spray.)
	Check and repair any deteriorated or damaged tile grout in bathrooms and kitchens and tiled floors elsewhere to prevent any moisture damage.
	Check all screens for tears and repair as needed.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

Seasonal Maintenance Schedule...continued

SUMMER: Enjoy it!

June	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

July and August	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

FALL

September: remember that winter can come early on the prairies so be prepared!	
	Inspect caulking around windows and doors and all other exterior penetrations for cracks or separation from the window or building and repair/replace as needed.
	Inspect all caulking inside and especially outside to ensure it is continuous and intact and touch-up or replace where needed with approved products.
	Clean windows, window tracks and make sure weep holes are not blocked (including sliding door tracks – lubricate openers and track rollers with silicone spray.)
	Check and repair any deteriorated or damaged tile grout in bathrooms and kitchens and tiled floors elsewhere to prevent any moisture damage.
	Check all screens for tears and repair as needed.
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

October and November	
	Check CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors if installed to ensure they are operating properly.
	Test all your smoke alarms to ensure they continue to give you the protections they offer.
	Check and re-set if necessary your GFCI circuits.

