

**Berks Homes**



# HOMEOWNERS MANUAL

Please visit us at [BerksHomes.com](http://BerksHomes.com) for a complete manual



## **BERKS HOMES WARRANTY DEPARTMENT**

3335 Morgantown Road / P0 Box 7 / Mohnton, PA 19540

877.856.6267 x 4 / 888.506.2032 fax / [warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com](mailto:warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com)

# OUR MISSION STATEMENT



We believe in earning trust one human interaction at a time.

We commit to follow through on every detail and every promise with civility and respect.

Our word is our currency.

Our commitments are long-term investments.

We aim to create an experience that gives you a feeling of home; a feeling so familiar, yet it is without definition. It just feels right.



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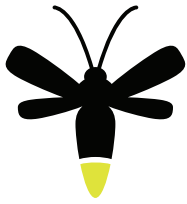
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Dear Homeowner:

Congratulations on your decision to purchase a new home from Berks Homes! We share your excitement building and moving into your new home soon and look forward to working with you during your warranty period. Berks Homes designed this Homeowner's Manual to assist you with essential mechanical and cosmetic home maintenance, including heating, air conditioning, electric and plumbing equipment, appliances, new lawn/shrub care, flooring and much more. The information contained in this manual will answer many questions as well as provide maintenance guidelines and a description of our limited warranty program, component by component. Although it is impossible to provide you with an all-inclusive manual, we addressed the items most commonly requested/questioned by our homeowners for assistance regarding the interior and exterior of your new home.

Berks Homes is proud of the homes and neighborhoods we build and strive to create lasting value. We stress that a structurally sound, efficiently operational and attractive home does require periodic maintenance due to normal wear and tear, age, interior and exterior temperature conditions and weather exposure - like any other product subject to use. Often times, a minor adjustment or repair done immediately will save a more serious, time-consuming, and sometimes costly repair later. Caring for your new home attentively will ensure your enjoyment for many years.

This manual provides a useful record of information about your new home, and we are certain it will help you protect your valuable investment. We urge you to take the time to read it thoroughly within the first three months after settlement to become acquainted with the materials and equipment in your home and refer to it over the years as needed.

We are delighted to welcome you as part of the Berks Homes' family and look forward to working with you!

Best wishes for many happy years in your new home!

Sincerely,

The Staff at Berks Homes



# Berks Homes

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## Reporting Warranty Items How To:

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Reporting warranty claims for your home is easy! For non-urgent claims, simply use your 2-3 and 9-11 month repair request forms found in your Orientation binder during the respective time frames and email, fax, or mail it to our office. If your claim can be classified as urgent, use the information below to allow us to provide you with the most efficient service.

Generally, warranty claims fall into one of the three categories:

- **In House** – A Berks Homes warranty technician will evaluate and address your claim.
- **Trade Contractor** – A technician from the appropriate trade will evaluate and address your claim. This includes electrical issues, plumbing issues, HVAC issues, and appliance issues.
- **Homeowner Maintenance** – Issues to be addressed by a homeowner. But don't worry, if you need assistance, contact Berks Homes and we will review the maintenance steps with you and offer informational assistance.

**To report an in-house claim too urgent to wait for the regular service time frames,** contact the Berks Homes warranty department at 1-877-856-6267 ext. 4 during normal business hours between 7am-4pm. We will issue a work order to our technician who will contact you to schedule a time to evaluate the issue. Appointment hours are Monday—Friday between 7am – 3pm.

**To report a trade contractor claim at any time during your warranty period,** contact the appropriate contractor found on your trade list during normal business hours.

Please have your model number, serial number, settlement date, and description of problem handy when reporting an appliance issue to the appliance supplier or manufacturer.

### Emergencies

In the event of an emergency after normal business hours, contact Berks Homes at 1-877-856-6267 ext. 8 and leave a voicemail with a description of the issue and a technician will contact you as soon as possible. If the issue requires a trade contractor, contact the appropriate contractor after leaving a message with Berks Homes.

## **Warranty List Instructions**

1. Please use the forms to submit your 2-3 and 9-11 month warranty request. Also, an electronic version may be emailed to you by contacting the warranty department at [warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com](mailto:warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com)
2. You may return the warranty list to Berks Homes by mail, fax or by email.
  - Mail to: Berks Homes/PO Box 7/Mohnton PA 19540
  - Fax: 1-888-506-2032
  - Email: [warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com](mailto:warrantydepartment@berkshomes.com)
3. Once your list is received, a service order will be created & our warranty technician will contact you to go over the items on your list & schedule an appointment with you.

# **Before You Dig**

**Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc.....(800) 242-1776**

or

**Miss Utility of Delaware.....(800) 282-8555**

For your safety, always call Pennsylvania One Call or Miss Utility of Delaware prior to any digging on your property (e.g. mailboxes, shrubs, etc...). They will notify the appropriate utility companies to locate and mark your property.

Three (3) working days notice is required.

This service is free, so please call.

## Cosmetic items *NOT* covered under Warranty after Orientation:

Berks Homes will correct cosmetic defects or damages identified and listed during your orientation meeting. Any damages found after settlement (such as chips, dents and scratches) are not covered under your warranty. The following are examples of components not under warranty for cosmetic damage:

- ◆ Blemishes in the appearance of interior or exterior finish surfaces
- ◆ Chipping of tile, countertops, vanities or fiberglass units
- ◆ Broken glass or torn screens
- ◆ Flaws in trim
- ◆ Blemished appliance finishes
- ◆ Stains or damage to flooring

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Signature

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Date

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Signature

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Date

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Firefly Homes Representative

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Date



# Appliances

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Follow all manufacturers' instructions for the use and maintenance of each appliance in your home.

### ***Manufacturer's Service***

If a problem occurs with an appliance, call the number listed on your trade contractor sheet for service. Have the following information available when reporting problems for warranty service:

- Date of purchase (your settlement date)
- Serial and model numbers, found on a metal plate or sticker on the side or bottom of each appliance
- Description of the problem

### ***Registration Helpful Hints***

- Before mailing your registration card, make a copy of it for your records.
- Mail all warranty registration cards directly to the manufacturer within 30 days of settlement. Some manufacturers may allow you to register on-line.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We confirm that all appliance surfaces are in acceptable condition during your orientation. We assign all appliance warranties to you, effective on the date of closing. The appliance manufacturers warrant their products directly to you according to the terms and conditions of these written warranties.

# Asphalt

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Asphalt is a flexible and specialized surface. Like any other surface in your home, it requires protection from things that can damage it. Over time, the effects of weather and earth movement will cause minor settling and cracking of asphalt. These are normal reactions to the elements and do not constitute improperly installed asphalt or defective material. After installation, do not drive on the driveway for 2 - 4 days, depending on the outdoor temperature. Even after your asphalt has cured, it will not be hard like cement. Asphalt will naturally soften as temperatures rise.

### ***Hot Weather***

Avoid any concentrated or prolonged loads on your asphalt, particularly in hot weather. High-heeled shoes, motorcycle or bicycle kickstands, lawnmowers, trailers and cars left in the same spot for long periods can create depressions or holes in asphalt. Cars starting out too fast, pulling in too quickly or turning your wheels back and forth while stationary can cause "scar marks." These marks are not structural damage. With continued use, these scar marks will blend into the existing surface.

### ***Chemical Spills***

Asphalt is a petroleum product. Gasoline, oil, turpentine and other solvents or petroleum products can dissolve or damage the surface. Wash such spills with soap and water immediately, and then rinse them thoroughly with plain water. Any hole left by these spills should be filled with cold patch.

### ***Nonresidential Traffic***

Prohibit commercial or other extremely heavy vehicles from pulling onto your driveway. It is designed for conventional residential vehicle use only: family cars, vans, light trucks, bicycles, etc. Special care should be taken not to drive over edges of your new driveway, since they may crack and crumble. This is not covered by the limited warranty.

### ***Seal Coating***

Exposure to sunlight and other weather conditions will fade your driveway, allowing the surface gravel material to be more visible. This is a normal condition and not a material or structural problem. To preserve your driveway, it is best to seal it 2 - 3 years after it has been paved, and reseal every 5 - 6 years thereafter. Due to reduction of traction, it is not advisable to seal your driveway if it is on a steep hill. Hairline cracks will usually be filled by the sealing process. Larger cracks can be filled or patched with a sand and sealer mixture prior to resealing.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty**

We perform asphalt repairs by filling/patching sunken spots due to settlement per NAHB performance guidelines. Berks Homes is not responsible for the inevitable differences in color between the patch and the original surface. Seal coating can minimize this cosmetic condition and is the homeowner's responsibility.

Heaving (lifting) of the asphalt may occur during prolonged hot weather periods or wet (usually icy) cold periods. Once temperatures return to a normal level, the asphalt should return to a normal level.

### ***Thermal Cracking***

Your driveway may exhibit thermal cracking, usually during the first 12 months. These cracks in your driveway are a result of freeze and thaw cycles. Longitudinal or transverse cracks will be corrected if NAHB performance guidelines are exceeded.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Attic Access

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The attic space is neither designed nor intended for storage. We provide access to this area for maintenance of mechanical equipment. Caulking around vent pipes and fan units should be checked annually and resealed as needed. When performing any maintenance tasks in the attic use caution and avoid stepping off wood members onto the drywall. This may result in personal injury or damage to the ceiling below. Your limited warranty does not cover such injury or damage.

Attic ventilation is required by building codes and cannot be omitted.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes provides ventilation and insulation in the attic area as required by building codes. Attic vents and louvers shall not leak; however, infiltration of wind-driven rain and snow are not considered leaks and beyond our control. Severe weather conditions are not covered under the Limited Warranty.

We will repair or replace roof vents as necessary to meet NAHB performance guidelines during the warranty period.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Cabinets

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Your selection sheets are your record of the brand, style and color of cabinets in your home. The cabinets you selected may be constructed of wood, wood veneer or composite materials. Expect differences in grain and color between and within the cabinet components due to natural variations in wood and the way it accepts stain.

### ***Cleaning***

Products such as lemon oil or polishes that include scratch cover are suggested for wood cabinet care. Follow product directions. Use such products a *maximum* of once every 3 - 6 months to avoid excessive build-up. Avoid paraffin-based spray waxes and washing cabinets with water, as both will damage the luster of the finish.

### ***Hinges and Hardware***

If hinges catch or drawer glides become sluggish, a small amount of silicone lubricant will improve performance. Cabinet and vanity hardware will loosen with repeated use; tighten the screws as needed.

### ***Moisture***

Damage to cabinet surfaces and warping may result from operating appliances that generate large amounts of moisture (such as a crock pot or coffee maker) too near the cabinet. When operating such appliances, place them in a location that is not directly under a cabinet.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that all cabinet parts are installed and that their surfaces are in acceptable condition. Alignment and operation of cabinet, doors, drawer fronts and pulls should be properly adjusted.

We will correct gaps between cabinets and the ceiling or cabinets and the walls by caulking or other means if the gap exceeds NAHB performance guidelines. (Locations behind appliances are not included in this repair.) If doors or drawer fronts warp from the face of the cabinet in excess of NAHB performance guidelines, corrections will be made by adjustment or replacement. Berks Homes does not guarantee a color or grain match. Readily noticeable variations in wood grain and color are normal in all wood or wood veneer selections. Replacements are not made due to such variations.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Countertops

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Use a cutting board to protect your counters when you cut or chop. Protect the counter from heat and from extremely hot pans. If it is too hot to the touch, do not put it on the counter.

### ***Caulking***

The caulking between a laminate countertop and the wall, along the joint at the backsplash and around the sink may shrink, leaving a slight gap. Re-caulking to maintain a good seal in these locations is important to keep moisture from reaching the wood under the laminates and to prevent warping.

### ***Cleaning***

Avoid abrasive cleaners that will damage the luster of the surface. To clean the surface, use a damp cloth or sponge and a mild soap or detergent. Difficult stains such as coffee or tea may be removed using a mild household cleaner/detergent. Visit the manufacturer's website to get the best maintenance tips specific to your countertop material.

### ***Mats***

Rubber drain mats may trap moisture beneath them, causing laminated tops to warp and blister. Dry the surface of all types of countertops to prevent warping, blistering or staining.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we confirm that all countertops are in acceptable condition in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines. We repair noticeable surface damage such as chips, cracks and scratches noted on the orientation list. **Surface damage that occurs during or after your move-in is not covered under your warranty.** Separation of countertops from walls, backsplash and around sinks results from normal shrinkage of materials. Berks Homes will recaulk these areas one time during the warranty period. Subsequently, caulking is the homeowner's maintenance responsibility.

### ***Laminates***

Laminated countertops are made from a layer of plastic material applied over a composite surface and may have one or more discernible seams. Delamination should not occur under normal conditions and use. Refrain from leaving any liquids near these seams or allowing the surface to become excessively hot.

### *Manufactured Marble*

Manufactured marble tops are made of high strength polyester resins that are molded and polished to form a strong, durable finish. Running only hot water for extended periods of time may cause cracking around drain seal. Countertops should not have chips, gouges or bubbles.

### *Solid Surfaces (Corian)*

Solid surface countertops and sinks are made of highly durable, non-porous materials. Solid surface countertops should be smooth and even. The surface will chip or dent if hit with a heavy object and the use of a hot pad or trivet is recommended.

### *Granite*

Granite is an extremely durable work surface, highly resistant to scratching and impervious to heat. It is also highly porous and absorbs moisture; therefore all our granite countertops are sealed to retard staining. Resealing your granite countertop on a regular basis will be necessary. Do not use ammonia products and immediately wipe up spills, especially acidic liquids, as they may etch the stone and reduce the natural luster. Granite countertops will have one or more discernible seams and have naturally very small areas of pitting, fissures, veining etc. These characteristics are unique and tell the “history” of the stone.

### *Quartz*

Quartz is a manufactured product and is generally more consistent in color than granite; however, some slight color and pattern variation is still quite possible and not considered a defect by the manufacturer. Sealing is not required, daily cleaning procedures include mild soap and water or non-abrasive, non-ammonia cleaners. The use of a hot pad or trivet is recommended.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Concrete and Foundations

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Concrete is a strong and durable material; however, its normal hardening process may result in small cracks visible on the surface, which normally do not indicate defects in the concrete. Foundation walls are subject to a wide variety of stresses and strains. Don't be alarmed if you see hairline cracks in your foundation walls. These cracks normally require no action. Protect your home's foundation and concrete flatwork (basement floor, porch, patio, garage floor, service walk and sidewalks) by maintaining good drainage. (See Landscaping chapter.)

### *Cracks*

A concrete slab 10 feet across shrinks approximately 5/8 inch as it cures. Some of this shrinkage shows up as cracks. Cracking of concrete flatwork also results from temperature changes that cause expansion and contraction. Minor shrinkage (hairline) cracks are common and should be expected.

### *Expansion Joints*

We install expansion joints to help control expansion and contraction. As the concrete shrinks during the curing process, expansion joints may become more visible. Hairline spider cracks may form around the expansion joint area; this is normal and should be expected.

### *Ice, Snow and Chemicals*

Driving or parking on snow creates ice, which magnifies the effects of snow on the concrete surface. Remove ice and snow from concrete slabs as promptly as possible after snow storms. Protect concrete from abuse by chemical agents such as pet urine, fertilizers, radiator overflow, repeated hosing or de-icing agents, such as road salt that may drip from vehicles. All of these items may cause spalling (chipping of the surface) of concrete.

### *Sealer*

A concrete sealer, available at paint stores, will help you keep an unpainted concrete floor clean. Do not use soap on unpainted concrete. Instead, use plain water and baking soda or, if necessary, a scouring powder.



## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

*Concrete service walks, stoops and patios* may move and settle; they are not attached to the home's foundation walls. These slabs are not a structural (load-bearing) element of the home. Berks Homes will correct any settled, heaved or separated slabs per NAHB performance guidelines.

Minor cracks in *garage floors* are normal. Any cracks, settled or heaved garage floors that exceed the NAHB performance guidelines will be corrected in accordance with those guidelines.

Shrinkage cracks in *concrete foundation walls* are common, typically caused by normal drying and settlement conditions. The only cracks considered under warranty claims are cracks that permit water penetration or horizontal cracks that cause a bow in the wall as per NAHB performance guidelines.

*Basement floor concrete* has control joints installed to allow for expansion and contraction. Uneven or cracked basement floors that exceed the NAHB performance guidelines will be corrected to meet those standards.

*Concrete floors in rooms designed for living* with unevenness that exceeds NAHB performance guidelines will be corrected, with the exception of an area specifically designed to slope toward a floor drain.

Berks Homes is not responsible for color variations in concrete as a result of repairs or replacement.

### ***Spalling (Surface Chips)***

Causes of spalling include repeated hosing of concrete for cleaning, animal urine, radiator overflow, fertilizer, snow and ice that has not been cleared, ice-melting agents, road salts from vehicles and snow removal of roadways. Repair of spalling is a home maintenance task.

### ***Standing Water***

Water may stand on exterior concrete slabs for several hours after precipitation or from roof run-off. Berks Homes will correct conditions that cause water to remain longer than 24 hours unless it is from roof run-off from melting snow or ice.

Occasionally, basement floors will collect water as a result of condensation of warm, moist air on the cold basement floor. You should be selective about items placed on a basement floor, particularly items that absorb moisture. **Berks Homes highly recommends the use of a dehumidifier. Dampness is not covered by the Limited Warranty.**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Decks

## Composite

### Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Composite decks add to the style and function of your home. Composite material withstands all weather conditions and requires almost no maintenance. Local home centers or hardware stores stock several products for cleaning your deck. Always follow manufacturer's directions carefully.

Use care when moving furniture around on a composite deck since the material will scratch, leaving permanent damage to the material. Over time, sunlight will cause colored decking material to fade.

### Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines

Composite decks are constructed to meet structural and functional design. During your orientation, we will confirm the deck is in satisfactory condition. Any surface damage caused after your orientation is not covered under the Limited Warranty.

## Wood

### Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Wood decks add to the style and function of your home and are a high maintenance part of your home's exterior.

### *Effects of Exposure*

Wood decks are subject to shrinkage, cracking, splitting, warping and twisting. Fasteners may loosen and will need routine maintenance. Plan to inspect your deck regularly and provide needed attention promptly to maintain an attractive appearance and prevent costly repairs. Berks Homes recommends that you treat your deck with a water repellent or wood preservative annually to prolong the life and keep it looking its best. Local home centers or hardware stores offer several products to consider for this purpose. Always follow manufacturer's directions carefully.

### *Outdoor Furniture*

The surface of the decking may be damaged by moving grills, furniture or other items. Use caution when moving such items to prevent surface damage. Abrasives and grit on shoes may scratch or dent the wood surface.

### *Snow and Ice*

Heavy snow or ice that remains on the deck over long periods increases wear and tear on the deck. Prompt removal will reduce adverse effects. Use caution in shoveling to avoid needless scratching of the deck boards.

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Exposed wood decks are constructed to meet structural and functional design. During your orientation, we will confirm that your wood deck is in satisfactory condition and meets NAHB performance guidelines.

Shrinkage, cracking, splitting, warping and twisting are natural occurrences in wood decks and are excluded from limited warranty coverage. In the event Berks Homes determines that replacement of materials is necessary, the new material will not match existing pieces that have been exposed to elements. Berks Homes does not provide corrections when problems occur due to lack of normal maintenance.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Interior Doors

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

The doors installed in your home are wood products subject to natural characteristics of wood such as expanding, contracting, shrinkage and warpage. Your interior doors (usually “hollow core”) may be affected by humidity changes caused by the use of showers, dishwashers, forced air furnaces and humidifiers. It is normal for interior doors to occasionally stick.

### *Bifold, Pocket and Sliding Doors*

Interior bifold, pocket and sliding doors may sometimes stick or warp because of weather conditions. Keep tracks free of dirt and debris; apply a silicone lubricant to the tracks to minimize this inconvenience. You may also remedy a squeaky door hinge by removing the hinge pin and applying a silicone lubricant to it. **Avoid using oil as it may gum up or attract dirt.**

### *Keys*

A key is placed on the top edge of the door casing outside each room with a privacy lock.

### *Shrinkage*

Use putty, filler or latex caulk to fill any minor separations that develop at mitered joints in door trim. Follow with painting. Panels of wood doors shrink and expand in response to changes in temperature and humidity. Touching up the paint or stain on unfinished exposed areas is a homeowner’s maintenance responsibility.

### *Slamming*

Slamming doors may damage both doors and jambs and may even cause cracking in walls. Teach children not to hang on the doorknob and swing back and forth; this works the hardware loose and causes the door to sag.

### *Sticking*

The most common cause of a sticking door is the natural expansion of lumber caused by changes in humidity. When sticking is caused by swelling during a damp season, try these two steps: first, apply either a paste wax, light coat of paraffin or candle wax to the sticking surface; or second, tighten the screws that hold the door jamb or door frame.

### ***Warping***

If a door warps slightly, keep it closed as much as possible; it often straightens.

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we confirm that all doors are in acceptable condition and open and close freely without binding against the door frame. All doors will latch to maintain a closed position.

Passage doors from room to room and closet doors may have an opening between the bottom of the door and the floor finish material up to 1 ½ inches. Any door opening in excess of 1 ½ inches will be adjusted or the door will be replaced to meet required tolerances.

If a door warps causing the door to become inoperable per NAHB performance standards, the door will be repaired or replaced.

Normal settling of the home may require adjustment for a proper fit. Berks Homes will make such adjustments one time during the warranty period.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Exterior Doors and Garage Doors

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The exterior doors on your home include a variety of door types and will react differently under various weather conditions. Exterior doors are equipped with a weather-stripping, which provides maximum seal against air infiltration. Check the weather-stripping regularly to make sure the seal is secure; proper weather-stripping guards against the elements. (This includes the weather stripping along the bottom edge and sides of the overhead garage door.) Unusually heavy or driving rains may cause minor seepage at the bottom of a door.

### ***Sliding Glass Patio Doors***

Sliding glass patio doors require periodic cleaning and lubricating of the bottom track to insure smooth operation. Be sure the drain holes are clear, so rainwater may flow out of the track.

### ***Overhead Garage Doors***

Overhead garage doors are not air tight. Some light will be visible around the edges and across the top of the door. Weather conditions may result in some precipitation entering around the door.

If a garage door opener is installed subsequent to closing on your home, we suggest that you order it from the company that provided and installed the garage door to insure warranty coverage. Be familiar with the steps for manual operation of the door in the event of a power failure.

For your safety, after the expiration of the one-year warranty, have any needed adjustments made by a qualified specialist. The door springs are under a considerable amount of tension and require special tools and knowledge for accurate and safe servicing. Have the door inspected by a professional garage door technician after any significant impact to the door.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Exterior doors (passage doors) should open and close freely without binding against the door frame. The door must latch to maintain a closed position; Berks Homes will make necessary adjustments to the door and latch for proper operation.

Exterior doors may warp to some degree due to temperature differences or changes in moisture content. However, doors should not warp to the extent they become inoperable; warping that exceeds NAHB performance standard tolerances will be corrected or replaced.

### ***Overhead Garage Door***

The garage door should operate smoothly and with reasonable ease. The door may become misaligned and require adjustment, which Berks Homes will provide unless the problem is caused by the installation of a garage door opener subsequent to closing on the home.

If Berks Homes installed a garage door opener per your selection, the electric eye safety stop feature is demonstrated during your orientation (in the event a person or object crosses through the opening while the overhead door is in motion). Use care not to place tools or other stored items where they may interfere with the function of the electric eye.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Windows and Screens

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The vinyl windows installed in your home are relatively maintenance free; however, the caulking around the window frames may deteriorate over time. Regularly check around the window frames and replace with caulking recommended by a hardware professional. **Always lock your windows when not in use, eliminating excessive air infiltration.**

### *Condensation*

Condensation on interior surfaces of the windows and frames is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures. It is a common occurrence and does not indicate a defect in the window. Your family's lifestyle controls the humidity level within your home. If your home includes a humidifier, follow the manufacturer's directions for its use. The use of exhaust fans when cooking or showering will help to control indoor humidity.

### *Screen Storage and Maintenance*

Many homeowners remove and store screens for the winter to allow more light into the home. To make re-installation more convenient, label each screen as you remove it. Use caution! Screens perforate easily and the frames bend if they are not handled with care. Prior to re-installing the screens, clean them with a hose and gentle spray of water.

### *Sticking Windows*

Most sliding windows (both vertical and horizontal) are designed for a 10-pound pull. If sticking occurs or excessive pressure is required to open or close a window, apply a silicone lubricant (available at most hardware stores). Avoid petroleum-based products.

### *Weep Holes*

In heavy rains, water may collect in the bottom channel of window frames. Weep holes are provided to allow excess water to escape to the outside. Keep the bottom window channels and weep holes free of dirt and debris for proper operation.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that all windows and screens are in acceptable condition as per NAHB performance guidelines. Berks Homes will repair or replace broken windows or damaged screens noted on your orientation list. Windows should operate with reasonable ease and locks should perform as designed. If they do not, Berks Homes will provide adjustments one time during the warranty period.



### *Condensation*

Condensation on interior surfaces of the window and frame is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures. Your family's lifestyle controls the humidity level within your home. Berks Homes provides no corrective measure for this condition. Remember to keep windows locked when not in use to guarantee a tight seal on the windows.

Condensation that accumulates between the panes of glass indicates a broken seal. Berks Homes will replace the window if this occurs under normal circumstances during the warranty period. Tinting may cause broken seals on your windows due to heat build-up. **Applying tinting to your windows voids both the manufacturer's and Berks Homes' warranties.**

### *Scratches*

Minor scratches on windows may result from delivery, handling, and other construction activities. Berks Homes confirms that all window glass is in acceptable condition at your orientation as per NAHB performance guidelines.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Electrical System

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Know the location of the breaker panel; it includes a main shut-off that controls all the electrical power in your home. Individual breakers control the separate circuits. Each breaker is marked to help you identify which breaker is connected to major appliances, outlets or other service. Should a failure occur in any part of your home, always check the breakers in the main panel box.

### *Breakers*

Circuit breakers have three positions: on, off and tripped. When a circuit breaker trips, it must first be turned off before it may be turned on. Switching the breaker directly from the tripped position to the on position will not restore service.

### *Tripping Breakers*

Breakers trip because of overloads caused by a variety of circumstances, such as plugging too many appliances into the circuit, a worn cord or defective appliance or operating an appliance with voltage exceeding the circuit limitation. Starting an electric motor may also trip a breaker.

If any circuit trips repeatedly, unplug all items connected to it and reset the circuit breaker. If it trips when nothing is connected to it, contact an electrician. If the circuit remains on, one of the items you unplugged is defective and will require repair or replacement.

### *GFCI (Ground-Fault Circuit-Interrupters)*

GFCI receptacles have a built-in element that senses fluctuations in power. Quite simply, the GFCI is a circuit breaker. Building codes require installation of these receptacles in the bathrooms, the kitchen, the exterior and the garage (areas where an individual may come into contact with water while holding an electric appliance or tool). Heavy appliances, such as freezers or power tools, may trip the GFCI breaker.

**Caution: Never plug a refrigerator or food freezer into a GFCI-controlled outlet. The likelihood of the contents being ruined is high and the limited warranty does not cover such damage.**

Each GFCI circuit has a test and reset button. Once each month, press the test button. This will trip the circuit. To return service, press the reset button. If a GFCI breaker trips during normal use, it may indicate a faulty appliance and you will need to investigate the problem. One GFCI breaker may control up to three or four outlets, such as in the bathrooms.

### *Phone Jacks*

Your home is equipped with telephone jacks. Initiating phone service, additions to phone service and moving phone outlets for decorating purposes or convenience are your responsibility.

### ***Light Bulbs***

You are responsible for replacing burned-out bulbs other than those noted during your orientation.

### ***Outlets***

If an outlet is not working, first check to see if it is controlled by a wall switch or GFCI. Next, check the breaker.

### ***Underground Cables (Before You Dig)***

**For your safety, always call Penn. One Call or Miss Utility prior to any digging on your property (e.g. mailboxes, shrubs, etc...). They will notify the appropriate utility companies to locate and mark your property. Three (3) working days notice is required. The service is free, so please call before you dig!**

**Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc. (in PA)     1-800-242-1776**

**or**

**Miss Utility (in DE)                             1-800-282-8555**

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that light fixtures are in acceptable condition and that all bulbs are working. Finishes on light fixtures may be covered under the manufacturer's warranty; Berks Homes limited warranty excludes fixture finishes.

Berks Homes will repair any electrical wiring that fails to carry its designed load to meet specifications. If electrical outlets, switches, or fixtures do not function as intended, Berks Homes will repair or replace them under your one year warranty.

Wiring for phone service that does not perform as intended from the phone service box **into** the home will be repaired. From the service box **outward**, care of the wiring is the responsibility of your local telephone service company.

### ***Power Surge***

Power surges are the result of local conditions beyond the control of Berks Homes and are excluded from limited warranty coverage. These may result in burned-out bulbs or damage to sensitive electronic equipment such as TVs, alarm systems and computers. Damage resulting from lightning strikes is excluded from limited warranty coverage.

**FOR EMERGENCIES, CONTACT YOUR ELECTRICAL TRADE CONTRACTOR, CONTACT INFORMATION IS LOCATED IN THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION OF THIS MANUAL.**

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS: NO ELECTRICAL SERVICE**

### *No Electrical Service Anywhere in the Home*

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Service is not out in the entire area. If so, contact the utility company.
- Main breaker and individual breakers are all in the on position.

### *No Electricity to One or More Outlets*

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Main breaker and individual breakers are all in the on position
- Applicable wall switch is on
- GFCI is set (see details on GFCIs in previous section)
- Item you want to use is plugged in
- Item you want to use works in other outlets
- Bulb in the lamp is good

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Smoke Detectors

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The smoke detectors installed in your home are hardwired together with a battery backup.

If a smoke detector makes a chirping sound, that is a sign that the battery needs to be replaced. Most smoke detectors use a 9-volt battery. Safety officials recommend that consumers change the batteries in smoke detectors semi-annually when daylight-saving time begins and ends.

## ***Locations***

Smoke detectors are installed in accordance with building codes, which dictate locations. Berks Homes cannot omit any smoke detectors and you should not remove or disable any smoke detectors.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We will test the smoke detectors during your orientation to confirm that they are working and to familiarize you with the alarm. It is the homeowner's responsibility to continue testing the smoke detectors after settlement.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Brick and Stone

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Brick and stone are two of the most durable and lowest maintenance finishes for a home's exterior. A record of your brick or stone color is included in your color selection sheets.

Do not allow ivy or other ground cover to grow on brick or stone. The roots from such plants will work their way into the mortar, promoting deterioration of the mortar.

### ***Efflorescence***

The white, powdery substance that sometimes accumulates on masonry surfaces is called efflorescence. This is a natural occurrence caused by moisture reacting with the soluble salts in the mortar and cannot be prevented. In some cases, you may remove efflorescence; however, it will usually disappear over time. Consult a home center or hardware store professional for products and instructions regarding the removal of efflorescence.

### ***Weep Holes***

You may notice small holes in the mortar along the lower row of bricks. These holes allow moisture that has accumulated behind the brick to escape. If they are clogged or plugged, they must be opened. If they cannot be seen, remove dirt and plantings until they are exposed.

### ***Tuck-Pointing***

After several years, the effects of water freezing and thawing in the mortar, acid rains and other environmental pollutants may wear on the joints. Tuck-pointing may be necessary (repairing the mortar between the bricks and stone) on brick or stone work joints. Otherwise, no regular maintenance is required.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We check the masonry work during your orientation to confirm correct installation of designated materials. Small hairline cracks due to shrinkage are common in mortar joints. Cracks in excess of NAHB performance guidelines will be repaired. Repair or replacement of masonry material shall match the existing material as close as possible.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Siding

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Siding expands and contracts in response to changes in humidity and temperature. Slight waves are visible in siding under moist weather conditions; shrinkage and separations will be more noticeable under dry conditions. Siding will make “popping” noises as it expands and contracts; this is normal behavior of vinyl siding and cannot be eliminated.

### *Cleaning*

Vinyl siding will occasionally require cleaning; use a mild detergent (no bleach) and a soft brush or cloth.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes warrants all siding to be free of defects in material and workmanship. We will confirm the good condition of the siding as per NAHB performance standards during your orientation. Subsequent damage to the siding will be by your responsibility to repair.

We will correct any separation between siding, trim, and masonry that exceeds NAHB performance standards. Siding, trim and masonry shall not allow water to enter your home. Berks Homes will correct any delaminating siding.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Stucco

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Stucco is a brittle cement product that is subject to expansion and contraction. Minor hairline cracks will develop in the outer layer of stucco. This is normal and does not reduce the function of the stucco in any way. Stucco is a durable finish; however, caulking around doors and windows may crack or shrink with age and must be maintained by the homeowner.

### *Efflorescence*

The white, powdery substance that sometimes accumulates on stucco surfaces is called efflorescence. This is a natural occurrence caused by moisture reacting with the soluble salts in the mortar and cannot be prevented. In some cases, you may remove it; consult your home center or hardware store professional for commercial products to remove efflorescence.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes will repair stucco cracks that exceed the NAHB performance standards. The repaired area will have slight color and texture variations from the original stucco application. Berks Homes is responsible for matching color as closely as possible.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**



# Fireplaces (Direct-Vent)

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

If your home is equipped with a direct-vent gas fireplace, there are certain things you should do to insure its proper operation. Make certain the pilot light is lit. Excessive winds may cause a downdraft, which may blow out the pilot, requiring you to relight it before using. Instructions for lighting the pilot are provided in the access area through the cover below the firebox.

Because a direct-vent fireplace is a sealed unit, the firebox may become extremely hot while fire is burning. Take care not to touch or have heat-sensitive items next to the firebox.

A slight delay between turning the switch on and flame ignition is normal. The flames should ignite gently and silently. If you notice any deviation from this typical flame ignition and/or any gas smell, immediately shut off the switch and report it to the trade contractor listed in your manual.

**Caution: The exterior vent cover for a direct-vent gas fireplace becomes extremely hot when the fireplace is operating.**

## Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines

During your orientation proper operation of the direct-vent fireplace is demonstrated. The slate/marble will be inspected for any chips. Surface damage that occurs during or after your move-in is not covered under your one-year warranty.

Read and follow all manufacturers' directions. For additional information or service during the one-year warranty period, contact the trade contractor listed in your manual.

For the first few minutes after lighting the fireplace, vapors may condense; fogging the glass and the flames may also be blue. The moisture will disappear within 10-15 minutes and the flames should become yellow.

A film may build up on the glass inside the firebox; this is created by emissions from the gas or propane flames. Periodic cleaning will be necessary, refer to the manual for assistance. Remember to always lay an old towel or sheet on the floor prior to removing the glass to eliminate the chance of soiling your carpet. Clean the slate/marble surround with a non-abrasive cleaner.

**Do not operate the unit with out the glass front properly installed and sealed.**

# Carpet

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Your color selection sheets provide a record of the brand, style and color of floor coverings in your home. Please retain this information for future reference. Refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for additional information on the care of your floor coverings.

### *Cleaning*

You can add years to the life of your carpet with regular care. Carpet wears out because of foot traffic and dirt particles that get trampled deep into the pile beyond the suction of the vacuum. The dirt particles wear down the fibers like sandpaper and dull the carpet. The most important thing you can do to protect your carpet is to vacuum it frequently.

Vacuum twice each week lightly and once a week thoroughly. Heavy traffic areas may require more frequent cleaning. A light vacuuming is three passes; a thorough job may need seven passes. A vacuum cleaner with a beater-bar agitates the pile and is more effective in bringing dirt to the surface for easy removal.

Vacuuming high-traffic areas daily helps keep them clean and maintains the upright position of the nap. Wipe spills and clean stains immediately. For best results, blot or dab any spill or stain; avoid rubbing. Test stain removers on an inconspicuous area of the carpet, such as in a closet, to check for any undesirable effects.

Have your carpet professionally cleaned regularly, usually after 18 months in your home and then once a year thereafter. Hot water extraction is recommended by most carpet manufacturers.

Remember, vacuum your carpets often!

### *Crushing*

Furniture and traffic may crush a carpet's pile fibers. Frequent vacuuming in high-traffic areas and glides or cups under heavy pieces of furniture will help to minimize crushing. Rotating your furniture to change the traffic pattern in a room promotes more even wear. Some carpets resist matting and crushing because of their level of fiber, but this does not imply or guarantee that no matting or crushing will occur. Heavy traffic areas such as halls and stairways are more susceptible to wearing and crushing. This is considered normal wear.

### *Fading*

Science has yet to develop a color that will not fade with time. All carpets will slowly lose some color due to natural and artificial forces in the environment. You can delay this process by frequently removing soil with vacuuming, regularly changing air filters in heating and air conditioning systems, keeping humidity and room temperature moderate and reducing sunlight exposure with window coverings.

### ***Filtration***

If interior doors are kept closed while the air conditioning is operating, air circulation from the closed room flows through the small space at the bottom of the door. This forces the air over the carpet fibers, which in turn act as a filter, catching particulate pollution. Over time, a noticeable stain may develop at the threshold or at the bottom of the baseboard.

### ***Seams***

Carpet usually comes in 12-foot widths, making seams necessary in most rooms. Efforts are made to limit the number of seams as well as the placement of the seams in unobtrusive areas as much as possible. Visible seams are not a defect unless they have been improperly made or unless the material has a defect, making the seam appear more pronounced than normal. The more dense and uniform the carpet texture, the more visible the seams will be.

Carpet styles with low, tight naps result in the most visible seams. Seams are never more visible than when the carpet is first installed. Usually with time, use and vacuuming, the seams become less visible. You may see examples in our model homes where carpet seams have diminished after they have been vacuumed repeatedly and have been subject to traffic.

### ***Shedding***

New carpeting, especially pile, sheds bits of fiber for a period of time. Eventually these loose fibers diminish by vacuuming. Shedding usually occurs more with wool carpeting than with nylon or other synthetics.

### ***Snags***

Sharp-edged objects may grab or snag the carpet fiber. When this occurs, cut off the snag. If the snag is especially large, call a professional.

Occasionally you may find small tufts of fiber sprouting above carpet surface. Simply use scissors to cut off the sprouts. Do not attempt to pull them because other fibers may run or detach completely in the process.

### ***Stains***

No carpet is stain-proof. If your carpet manufacturer designates your carpet as stain-resistant, some substances may still cause permanent staining. These include hair dyes, shoe polish, paints and India ink. Some substances destroy or change the color of carpets, including bleaches, acne medications, drain cleaners, plant food, insecticides and food or beverages with strongly colored natural dyes as found in some brands of mustard and herbal tea.

Refer to your care and maintenance brochures included in this binder for recommended cleaning procedures for your particular fiber. Pretest any spot-removal solution in an inconspicuous area before using it in a large area.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that your carpet is in acceptable condition as per NAHB performance standards. We will correct stains or spots noted at this time by cleaning, patching or replacing. Berks Homes is not responsible for dye lot variations if replacements are made.

Edges of carpet along moldings and edges of stairs should be held firmly in place. In some areas, metal or other edging material may be used where carpet meets another floor covering. We will restretch or resecure carpeting as needed one time during the warranty period.

Carpet seams are unavoidable; however, as per NAHB performance standards, visible gaps are not acceptable and will be corrected.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Ghosting

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

We have received feedback from homeowners (in both old and new homes) regarding black, sooty stains that have developed on surfaces in their homes. Carpets, walls, ceilings, appliances, mirrors and around area rugs are some examples of affected surfaces. Berks Homes diligently investigated and researched the possible causes.

The conclusion of the research and laboratory tests disclosed that the majority of this staining or “ghosting” is caused by burning scented candles that pollute the air in the home. As these scented candles burn, incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons contributes a considerable amount of soot to the air. This sooty substance then settles or accumulates on surfaces in the home. The sooty deposits are extremely difficult to remove. In fact, on some surfaces (light-colored carpet, for instance), they are impossible to remove completely.

The popularity of scented candles has increased dramatically in recent years. If you burn scented candles, we caution you about the potential permanent damage that may occur in your home. When ghosting results from homeowners burning candles or other lifestyle choices that produce incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons polluting and contributing a considerable amount of soot to the air, the black, sooty stains are excluded from our limited warranty coverage.

# Ceramic Tile

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Your color selection sheets include the brand and color of your ceramic tile. A copy of your selection sheet may be found in the Customer Service section of this binder.

### ***Cleaning***

Ceramic tile is one of the easiest floor coverings to maintain. Mopping with warm water and a mild cleaning agent are recommended.

The ceramic tile installed on walls or countertops in your home may be washed with any nonabrasive soap, detergent or tile cleaner. Abrasive cleaners will dull the finish.

### ***Grout Discoloration***

Clean grout that becomes discolored or stained with a fiber brush, cleanser and water. Grout cleansers and whiteners are available at most hardware stores.

### ***Sealing Grout***

Berks Homes does not seal tile grout. If you decide to seal the grout, ongoing maintenance of that seal is necessary; follow manufacturers' instructions.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we confirm that tile and grout areas are in acceptable condition as per NAHB performance standards. We will repair or replace cracked, badly chipped or loose tiles noted at that time. Berks Homes is not responsible for variations in color or patterns. New grout may vary in color from the original.

### ***One-Time Repair***

Grout and caulking cracks appearing at tile joints or junctions with other materials are common due to shrinkage. Berks Homes will repair grout and caulking cracks around bathtubs and showers that separates per NAHB performance standards one time during the first year. Loose or cracked tiles will be replaced if not due to homeowner negligence. We are not responsible for color variations in grout or discontinued grout colors. Any grouting or caulking that is needed after the first year is the homeowner's responsibility.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Hardwood Floors

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Hardwood flooring will have some minor separations between the boards due to shrinkage of the material, varying temperatures, and humidity. Expect some shrinkage around heat vents or any heat-producing appliances. Warping may occur if the floor repeatedly becomes wet or is thoroughly soaked even once.

In daily care of hardwood floor, preventive maintenance is the primary goal. Sweep on a daily basis or as needed, never wet-mop a hardwood floor. Excessive water causes wood to expand and may possibly damage the floor. When damp-mopping, remove all excess water from the mop. Check with the manufacturer for recommended cleaning products.

Install proper floor protectors on furniture placed on hardwood floors. Protectors will allow chairs to move easily over the floor without scuffing. Regularly clean the protectors to remove any grit that may have accumulated.

### ***Humidity***

Wood floors respond noticeably to changes in humidity in your home. Especially during winter months the individual planks or pieces expand and contract as water content changes. A humidifier helps but does not eliminate this reaction.

### ***Mats and Area Rugs***

Use protective mats at the exterior doors to help prevent sand and grit from getting on the floor. Gritty sand is wood flooring's worst enemy. However, be aware that rubber backing on area rugs or mats may cause yellowing and warping of the floor surface.

Exposure to direct sunlight may cause irreparable damage to hardwood floors. To preserve the beauty of your hardwood floors, install and use window coverings in these areas.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation we will confirm that hardwood floors are in acceptable condition per NAHB performance guidelines. We will only correct any readily noticeable cosmetic defects listed during the orientation. Gaps between wood floorboards that do not meet NAHB performance standards will be repaired, unless the gaps are due to normal seasonal fluctuation. Replacing boards may cause variations in graining and color. Face nailing with a finish nail is an acceptable method used for replacement.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Resilient Flooring

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Although resilient floors are designed for minimum care, they do have maintenance needs. Most resilient flooring is “no wax,” which means it has a clear, tough coating on the surface. Even this surface will scuff or become dull over time. Follow the manufacturer’s specific recommendations for care, cleaning, and maintaining the finish.

### ***Moving Furniture***

Moving appliances across resilient floor covering may result in tears and wrinkles. Install coasters on furniture legs to prevent permanent damage. If you damage the resilient floor, you can have it successfully patched by professionals. After installing your floor covering, any remaining pieces are left at your home in the event a repair is necessary. Such repairs will be less apparent using the same dye lot material whenever possible.

### ***Raised Nail Heads***

Raised nail heads are the result of movements of the floor joist caused by natural shrinkage and deflection. If a nail “pop” becomes visible through resilient flooring, place a block of wood over it and hammer the block to reset the nail.

### ***Seams***

Any brand or type of resilient flooring may separate slightly due to shrinkage. Seams may lift or curl if excessive moisture is allowed to penetrate them. Floors should be damp mopped, not flooded with water during cleaning. Avoid getting large amounts of water on the floor from baths and showers.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We will confirm that resilient floor covering is in acceptable condition during your orientation. Berks Homes limited warranty does not cover damage to resilient floors caused by moving furniture or appliances into the home. We can assist you contacting a professional who can repair such damage if necessary. Berks Homes is not responsible for discontinued selections or color variations.

Resilient floor covering should adhere. Berks Homes will repair lifting or bubbling and nail pops that appear on the surface.



### ***Ridges***

Berks Homes has sanded and filled the joints of underlayment to minimize the possibility of ridges showing through resilient floor coverings. Ridging is measured by centering a 6-inch straight edge perpendicular over the ridge with one end tight to the floor. If the opposite end of the straight edge is 1/8 inch or more from the floor, Berks Homes will repair the ridge(s) and affected floor covering will be repaired or replaced.

### ***Seams***

Seams will occur and are sealed at the time of installation. Berks Homes will correct gaps in excess of 1/8 inch where resilient flooring pieces meet or 3/16 inch where resilient flooring meets another material. Tears, cuts, or scrapes in the finished surface are not covered by Berks Homes unless identified during your orientation. Berks Homes will correct curling at seams unless caused by excessive water.

# Heating System: Heat Pump

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

If your home contains a heat pump system, you should be aware of the performance characteristics unique to these systems. As with any system, read the manufacturer's literature and follow all instructions for efficient operation and maintenance of your system.

### *Air Circulation Across Coils*

Keep the outside unit clear of any materials that would interfere with air circulation. Snow, ice, landscaping materials, trash, leaves and other accumulating items may cause inefficiency or damage the unit.

### *Air Conditioning and Heating*

A heat pump system operates differently from a gas forced-air furnace. Unlike forced air systems, both heat and air conditioning are part of a single heat pump system. This is possible because a refrigerant flows back and forth in the coils of the heat pump, controlled by a reversing valve. In the heating mode, the heat pump removes heat from the outside air and transfers it to the inside air. In the cooling mode, it does just the opposite, removing heat from the inside air and discharging it outside of the home. The thermostat inside your home controls this heating or cooling activity.

### *Air Temperature at Vents*

Do not expect dramatic temperature differences in the air coming from the vents as is common with other kinds of systems. The coils used in a heat pump system operate at lower temperatures than those common in a gas forced-air system. For example, in the heat mode, air from the supply vents will typically range from 85 to 90 degrees F. The vents will not feel hot, though the air discharged is warmer than the air in the room by as much as 20 degrees.

### *Auxiliary Heat System*

At lower outside temperatures, less heat is available for the heat pump to draw from the exterior air. Therefore, from time to time the auxiliary heat system will come on to maintain the temperature you set at the thermostat. The auxiliary system will also come on whenever the temperature at the thermostat is moved 1.5 degrees or more at one time. If the light stays on when the outside temperature is more than 30 degrees F, contact a service person.

### *Defrost Cycle*

When the heat pump is operating in the heat mode, the coils outside may reach below freezing temperatures. Moisture in the air will condense into frost and accumulate on the coils under these circumstances. From time to time, the system will go into defrost mode to clear accumulated frost from the coils. This is a normal part of the operation of the system and will occur automatically.

During the defrost cycle, the outside fan will stop temporarily. The temperature of airflow into the home will be a bit lower during the defrost cycle. The defrost cycle may only occur once every 90 minutes and lasts no longer than 10 minutes.

### *Register Adjustment*

Registers will require adjustment from time to time to maximize your family's comfort. Do not completely close off more than one supply register at a time. This may restrict the airflow too much and reduce the efficiency of the system. A good technique is to completely open all the vents, gradually move the temperature setting up until the coolest room is comfortable. Once the coolest room is comfortable, gradually close the vents in the warmer rooms until all rooms are comfortable as well. Reverse the process for air conditioning.

### *Return Air Vents*

As with any heating system, return air vents must be clear so the air easily and efficiently flows through the ducts. Avoid placing furniture where it blocks the return air vents.

**FOR EMERGENCIES, CONTACT YOUR HVAC TRADE CONTRACTOR, CONTACT INFORMATION IS LOCATED IN THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION OF THIS MANUAL.**

**TROUBLESHOOTING TIP: NO HEAT OR AUXILIARY HEAT STAYS ON WHEN THE OUTSIDE TEMPERATURE IS 30 DEGREES OR ABOVE.**

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Thermostat is set to "heat" and the temperature is set above the room temperature.
- Breaker on the main electrical panel is on. (Remember! If a breaker trips, you must turn it from the tripped position to the off position before you may turn it back on.)
- Filter is clean to allow airflow.
- Vents in individual rooms are open.
- Air returns are unobstructed.
- Outside unit is not blocked by snow or other materials.
- Outside coil does not have an excessive ice build-up.

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We install heating systems according to local building codes, as well as to engineering designs for your particular model home. Service on your furnace is warranted for one year; additional coverage may be available through the manufacturer after the first year. Refer to the manufacturer's limited warranty for information regarding warranty coverage.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Heating System: Gas Forced Air

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Regular maintenance of your furnace may save energy dollars and prolong the life of the furnace. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and maintenance.

### *Adjustable Registers*

Heat register covers are removable and adjustable. Closing or partially closing the floor registers in seldom used rooms will force more air elsewhere, which will optimize the heat flow for your family's lifestyle. Experiment with the adjustable registers to establish the best heat flow for your family's comfort. Registers in the rooms farther away from the furnace will usually need to be opened wider.

For maximum comfort and efficient energy use, arrange furniture and draperies to allow unobstructed airflow from registers and to cold air returns.

### *Air Filter*

A clean air filter will help to keep your home clean and reduce dusting chores. Remember to change or clean the filter regularly. A dirty filter may slow airflow and cause cold spots in your home. Although it takes less than one minute to change the filter, this is one of the most frequently overlooked details of normal furnace care.

If you have a disposable filter, the size and type are printed along the edge of the filter in your furnace. If you have a permanent, washable, removable filter, use water only to clean the filter, tap to dry or air dry, and leave unit off for a brief period. Do not use soaps or detergents on the filter.

### *Odor*

A new heating system may emit an odor for a few moments when you first turn it on. An established system may emit an odor after being unused for an extended time (such as after the summer months if you do not use air conditioning). This is caused by dust that has settled in the ducts and should pass quickly.

### *Combustion Air*

The furnace in your home is a 90% efficiency unit that includes a combustion air duct or fresh air intake. Cold air coming in through this duct means it is functioning properly.

*Caution! Never cover or block the combustion air vent in any way. Outside air is needed to supply the furnace with sufficient oxygen. Blocking the combustion air vent can cause the furnace to shut down (for safety reasons) to try and eliminate the chance of poisonous gases being drawn back into your home.*

## *Temperature*

Depending on the style of home, temperatures may normally vary from floor to floor as much as 10 degrees or more on extremely cold days. The furnace blower will typically cycle on and off more frequently and for shorter periods during severe cold spells.

## *Thermostat*

The furnace will come on automatically when the temperature at the thermostat registers below the setting you have selected. Once the furnace is on, setting the thermostat to a higher temperature will not heat the home faster. Thermostats are calibrated to within plus or minus 5 degrees.

## *Trial Run*

Have a trial run early in the fall to test the furnace. (The same applies to air conditioning in the spring.) If service is needed, you will have ample time before the start of the heating season.

## *Duct Placement*

The exact placement of heat ducts may vary from those positions shown in similar floor plans.

## *Ductwork*

Although the heat system is not a sealed system, the ductwork should remain attached and securely fastened. If it becomes unattached, Berks Homes will repair as needed.

## *Furnace Sounds*

As the heating system operates, it is normal to hear some ticking, popping and pinging sounds. These sounds are the natural result of ductwork heating and cooling in response to the airflow. There is no necessary maintenance for this situation. A very loud noise known as oil canning is not acceptable; only oil canning noise will be corrected.

**FOR EMERGENCIES, CONTACT YOUR HVAC TRADE CONTRACTOR, CONTACT INFORMATION IS LOCATED IN THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION OF THIS MANUAL.**

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS: NO HEAT**

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Thermostat is set to "heat" and the temperature is set above the room temperature.
- Blower panel cover is installed correctly for the furnace blower (fan) to operate. This panel compresses a button that tells the blower it is safe to operate. Similar to the way a clothes dryer door operates, this panel pushes in a button that lets the fan motor know it is safe to come on. If that button is not pushed in, the furnace will not operate.
- Breaker on the main electrical panel is on. (Remember, if a breaker trips you must turn it from the tripped position to the off position before you may turn it back on.)

- Filter is clean to allow airflow.
- Vents in individual rooms are open.
- Air returns are unobstructed.

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We install heating systems according to local building codes, as well as to engineering designs for your particular model home. Service on your furnace is warranted for one year. However, additional coverage may be available through the manufacturer after the first year. Refer to the manufacturer's limited warranty for information regarding warranty coverage.

Adequacy of the system is determined by NAHB performance guidelines. It is acceptable for all rooms to vary in temperature by 3 to 4 degrees.

### ***Gas Odor***

**If you smell gas, call your gas company immediately.**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Ventilation

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Homes today are built more tightly than ever, saving energy resources and dollars, but impacting ventilation. Condensation, cooking odors, indoor pollutants, radon and carbon monoxide may all accumulate. We provide mechanical and passive methods for ventilating homes. Your attention to ventilation is important to health and safety. Building codes require attic and crawl space vents to minimize accumulation of moisture.

### *Attic Vents*

Attic ventilation occurs through ridge vents, vents in the soffit (the underside of the overhangs) or on gable ends. Driving rain or snow sometimes enters the attic through these vents. Do not cover them to prevent this from happening. Instead, cover the insulation in front of the vent. When you do this, precipitation that blows in safely evaporates and ventilation occurs as designed.

### *Daily Habits*

Your daily habits may help keep your home well ventilated:

- Do not cover or interfere in any way with the fresh air supply to your furnace.
- Turn on the hood fan when you are cooking.
- Turn on the bath fans when bathrooms are in use.
- Air your house by opening windows for a time when weather permits.

Proper ventilation will prevent excessive moisture from forming on the inside of the windows. This helps reduce cleaning chores considerably.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes warranty guidelines for active components (for example, exhaust fans) are explained under specific headings (such as electrical systems, heating system, etc.).

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**



# Humidifier

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Operate a humidifier only with the furnace, not with the air conditioner. If you notice condensation on windows, the humidifier should be adjusted to a lower setting. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and suggested timetable for maintenance. See the "Condensation" page for additional information regarding humidifier operation.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Refer to the manufacturer's limited warranty for information regarding coverage of the humidifier.

# Air Conditioning

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Air conditioning may greatly enhance the comfort of your home, but if it is used improperly, wasted energy and efficiency may occur. These hints and suggestions are provided to help you maximize your air conditioning system's efficiency.

Your air conditioning system is a whole-house system. The air conditioning unit has been sized according to the square footage and layout of your home.

The air conditioning is a closed system, which means that the interior air is continually recycled and cooled until the desired air temperature is reached. Warm outside air disrupts the system and may make cooling impossible. Therefore, you should keep all windows closed and locked. The heat from the sun shining through windows with open drapes is intense enough to overcome the cooling effect of the air conditioning unit. For best results, minimize the sun's heat by covering windows with shades, blinds or drapes.

Time is very important in your expectations of an air conditioning system. Unlike a light bulb that reacts instantly at the flip of a switch, the air conditioning unit begins the cooling process when the thermostat is lowered or turned on. For example, if you come home at 6:00 p.m. when the outside temperature is 90 degrees and set your thermostat to 75 degrees, the air conditioning unit will begin cooling but will take a while to reach the desired temperature. During the day, the sun has not only been heating the air in the house but also the walls, carpet, window treatments and furniture. The air conditioning unit began working to cool the air, but the warm walls, carpet, window treatments and furniture release heat, slowing down the cooling process - reducing its efficiency, wasting energy and costing more money to run.

If evening cooling is your primary goal, set the thermostat at a moderate temperature in the morning while the house is cooler, allowing the system to maintain the cooler temperature. The temperature setting may then be lowered slightly when you arrive home, which will result greater efficiency, conserved energy and cost savings. Once the system is operating, setting the thermostat at a much lower temperature will *not* cool the home any faster and may result in the unit freezing up and not performing at all. Extended use under these conditions may damage the unit.

### *Adjust Registers*

The registers in your home help to regulate the flow of air to sustain the desired temperature. It may be necessary to adjust the registers slightly to maintain a family's comfort level and lifestyle. (Likewise, when the seasons change, the registers should be readjusted for a comfortable heating temperature.) Because cool air falls, adjust registers to push airflow upward for the best results.

## *Humidifier*

If a humidifier is installed on the furnace system, remember to turn it off when you use the air conditioning.

## *Manufacturer's Instructions*

The manufacturer's manual specifies maintenance instructions to perform on your system. The manual also provides recommended frequency for professional cleaning and maintenance.

## *Temperature Variations*

It is acceptable for temperatures to vary from room to room by 5 or 6 degrees. This is due to such variables as floor plan, orientation of the home on the lot, type and use of window coverings and traffic through the home.

## **Troubleshooting Tips: No Air Conditioning**

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Thermostat is set to "cool" and the temperature is set below the room temperature.
- Blower panel cover is installed correctly for the furnace blower (fan) to operate. Similar to the way a clothes dryer door operates, this panel pushes in a switch that lets the fan motor know it is safe to run. If that switch is not pushed in, the furnace blower (fan) will not operate.
- Air conditioner and furnace breakers on the main electrical panel are on. (Remember, if a breaker trips, you must turn it from the tripped position to the off position before you may turn it back on.)
- Filter is clean to allow air flow.
- Vents in individual rooms are open.
- Air returns are unobstructed.
- Air conditioner has not frozen from overuse.

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

The air conditioning system shall adequately cool the home per NAHB performance guidelines. If the cooling temperature is not met per the NAHB performance guidelines, Berks Homes will have the necessary corrections made for proper operation.

The air conditioning compressor must be in a level position to operate correctly. If it settles during the warranty period, Berks Homes will correct this.

*Non-emergency*

**Lack of air conditioning service is not an emergency. Air conditioning contractors in our region respond to air conditioning service requests during normal business hours and in the order received.**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Condensation

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

When warm, moist air comes into contact with cooler surfaces, the moisture condenses. Outside it appears as dew; inside it appears as a layer of moisture on windows and doors. Condensation develops as a result of high humidity levels within the home combined with a low outside temperature. It is important to vent excess moisture to the outside by always using exhaust fans in bathrooms and keeping the dryer exhaust hose clean and securely connected.

### *Humidifier Operation*

If your home includes a humidifier, closely observe the manufacturer's directions for its use and operation. Humidifiers should be turned off during air conditioning seasons. Moderate settings in winter may help maintain desired comfort levels without causing high humidity levels within your home. You may need to experiment to find the preferred level for your family's comfort.

### *New Construction*

Some experts have estimated that the average new home contains 50 gallons of water. Water is part of lumber, concrete, drywall, paint, caulk and other materials used in construction. Wet weather during construction adds more moisture. This moisture evaporates into the air over time adding to the moisture generated by normal living activities. Eventually, the moisture level from new construction will diminish.

### *Temperature*

Avoid setting your thermostat at extreme temperatures. Heating your home too high will cause the materials to dry out faster, generating more moisture into the air; drying the materials out too fast also increases shrinkage, cracks and separations.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Condensation results from weather conditions and a family's lifestyle. Berks Homes has no control over these factors. The limited warranty coverage excludes condensation unless caused by faulty installation or material defects. **Berks Homes highly recommends the use of a dehumidifier year round in the basement.**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Insulation

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The insulation package installed in your home meets with applicable energy code requirements. When referring to insulation, the term “R-value” is often used. Insulation’s R-value is the level of resistance between the transference of heat and cold in walls and ceilings. The total R-value may vary depending on the insulated area. The greatest heat loss is through ceilings and roofs, which is why a higher R-value is used in these areas.

The effectiveness of blown insulation is enhanced by an even distribution. If you do any work in your attic, be cautious not to displace the uniform distribution of insulation. Do not step on insulated spaces between the attic trusses. This may result in personal injury or damage to the drywall ceilings below as well as displace the insulation.

Electrical outlets may emit noticeable amounts of cold air when outside temperatures are low. You may elect to install foam insulation under switch and outlet plates to help decrease the draft.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes installed insulation to meet the building codes applicable at the time of construction and outlined as part of your purchase agreement.

In the case of dispute over sufficiency of insulation, contact Berks Homes. If it is found that the standard has not been met, Berks Homes will install in accordance to applicable code. If sufficient insulation has been installed, it is the homeowner’s responsibility to pay for the cost to investigate the sufficiency of insulation.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Expansion and Contraction

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Changes in temperature and humidity cause all building materials to expand and contract. Dissimilar materials expand and contract at different rates. This movement results in separation between materials, particularly those differing in composition. You will see the effects in small cracks in drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners and where tile grout meets a tub or sink. While this may alarm an uninformed homeowner, it is a normal condition.

Shrinkage of the wood members is inevitable and occurs in every new home. Although this is most noticeable during the first year, it may continue beyond that time. In most cases, caulk and paint are all that is needed to conceal minor evidences of this natural occurrence. Even though properly installed, caulking shrinks and cracks. Maintenance of caulking is the homeowner's responsibility.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty**

Berks Homes provides one-time repairs to many of the effects of expansion and contraction and are explained under specific headings (such as drywall and caulking).

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that all painted or stained surfaces are in acceptable condition per NAHB performance guidelines. Berks Homes will touch up paint as indicated on the orientation list. You are responsible for all subsequent touch-ups except painting we perform as part of a warranty related repair.

### ***Cracking***

As it ages, exterior wood trim will develop minor cracks and raised grain. Much of this will occur during the first year. Raised grain permits moisture to get under the paint and may result in peeling. This is not a defect in materials or workmanship. Paint maintenance of wood trim is the homeowner's responsibility.

### ***Fading***

Expect fading of exterior paint or stain caused by the effects of sun light and weather. Berks Homes' limited warranty excludes fading from coverage.

### ***Touch-Up Visible***

Paint touch-ups are visible under certain lighting conditions. Interior paint should sufficiently cover the walls, ceiling and trim surfaces as per NAHB performance guidelines.

### ***Wood Grain***

Because of wood's natural characteristics, color variations will result when stain is applied to it. This is natural and requires no repair. Today's water-base paints often make wood grain visible on painted trim. Berks Homes does not provide corrections for this condition.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**



# Drywall

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

While your new home is in the process of drying and settling, slight cracking, screw pops and seams may become visible in walls and ceilings. These are common occurrences caused by the shrinkage and normal deflection of wood to which the drywall is attached.

### *Repairs*

With the exception of the one-time repair service provided by Berks Homes, care of drywall is the homeowner's maintenance responsibility. Most drywall repairs can be easily made.

Repair hairline cracks with a coat of paint. You can repair slightly larger cracks with spackle or caulk. To correct a nail pop, reset the screw with a hammer and punch. Cover it with spackle, which is available at paint and hardware stores. Apply two or three thin coats. When dry, sand the surface with fine-grain sandpaper and then paint. You can fill indentations caused by sharp objects in the same manner.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we confirm that drywall surfaces are in acceptable condition. Flaws and blemishes in drywall that are readily visible under normal lighting conditions and at the acceptable distance per NAHB performance guidelines will be corrected. Berks Homes does not repair drywall flaws that are visible only under particular lighting conditions or under the accepted distance per NAHB performance guidelines.

Berks Homes will repair drywall cracks in the walls and ceilings as per NAHB performance guideline standards one time during the warranty period. It is recommended your request for drywall repairs be reported on the 9- to 11-month list because most settling of a new home occurs during the first year.

**Painting drywall repairs is the responsibility of the homeowner.**

If drywall repairs are needed due to warranty-based repairs (such as a plumbing leak); Berks Homes will finish such repairs by touching up the repaired areas with paint. However, you are responsible for custom paint colors that have been applied subsequent to closing. The effects of time on paint and dye lot variations may cause touched-up areas to differ from the surrounding surface.

No repairs will be made to drywall in rooms that have been wall papered.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Paint and Stain

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The interior walls of your home have been painted with flat paint and your trim in a high-gloss. Painted surfaces must be washed gently using mild soap and as little water as possible. Avoid abrasive cleaners, scouring pads and scrub brushes. Flat paints show washing marks more easily than gloss paints. Often better results come from touching up with paint rather than washing the paint.

### *Colors*

Your color selection sheets are your record of the paint and stain color names, numbers, and brands in your home.

### *Exterior*

Regular attention and maintenance will preserve the beauty and value of your home. Check the painted and stained surfaces of your home's exterior annually. Repaint/restain before much chipping or wearing of the original finish occurs; this will save the cost of extensive surface preparation.

Over time, the exterior finish will fade and dull a bit. Depending on exposure to weather conditions and sun light, the paint on some parts and sides of your home may begin to show signs of deterioration sooner than others.

When repainting the exterior of your home, begin by resetting popped nails and removing blistered or peeling portions of paint with a wire brush or putty knife. Sand, spot with primer and then paint the entire area.

Avoid having sprinklers spray water on the exterior walls of your home. This may cause blistering, peeling, splintering and other damage to the home.

### *Severe Weather*

Hail and wind can cause a great deal of damage in a severe storm, so inspect the house after such weather. Promptly report damage caused by severe weather to your insurance company.

### *Touch-Up*

When doing paint touch-ups, use a small brush, applying paint only to the damaged spot. Touch-up may not match the surrounding area exactly, even if the same paint mix is used. We provide 2 quarts of wall, 1 quart of interior trim, and ½ quart of each exterior paint (except for lintels) used on your home. Tightly seal lids and store paint cans in a location where they will not be subjected to extreme temperatures.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that all painted or stained surfaces are in acceptable condition per NAHB performance guidelines. Berks Homes will touch up paint as indicated on the orientation list. You are responsible for all subsequent touch-ups except painting we perform as part of a warranty related repair.

### ***Cracking***

As it ages, exterior wood trim will develop minor cracks and raised grain. Much of this will occur during the first year. Raised grain permits moisture to get under the paint and may result in peeling. This is not a defect in materials or workmanship. Paint maintenance of wood trim is the homeowner's responsibility.

### ***Fading***

Expect fading of exterior paint or stain caused by the effects of sun light and weather. Berks Homes' limited warranty excludes fading from coverage.

### ***Touch-Up Visible***

Paint touch-ups are visible under certain lighting conditions. Interior paint should sufficiently cover the walls, ceiling and trim surfaces as per NAHB performance guidelines.

### ***Wood Grain***

Because of wood's natural characteristics, color variations will result when stain is applied to it. This is natural and requires no repair. Today's water-base paints often make wood grain visible on painted trim. Berks Homes does not provide corrections for this condition.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Grading and Drainage

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The final grading around your home has been inspected and approved for proper drainage of your lot. The grading should allow for positive drainage away from your home. You and your neighbors share an overall drainage plan for the community; your yards may drain from one to another. In most cases, drainage swales do not follow property boundaries. Use caution when installing landscaping, fencing and/or additions to your home; such disturbances may cause water problems to your home, your lot and/or adjacent lots.

### *Drainage*

Berks Homes establishes the final grading around your home to ensure adequate water drainage away from the home. This is essential to protect your foundation. Maintaining the drainage is the homeowner's responsibility.

### *Exterior Finish Materials*

Maintain soil levels below siding, stucco, brick and other exterior finish materials. Contact with the soil may cause deterioration of the exterior finish material and encourages pest infestations.

### *Settling*

The area we excavated for your home's foundation was larger than the home to allow room to work. In addition, some trenching is necessary for installation of utility lines. Although we replace and compact the soil, it does not return to its original density. Some settling will occur, especially after prolonged or heavy rainfall or melting of large amounts of snow. Settling may continue for several years. Inspect the perimeter of your home regularly for signs of settling and fill settled areas as needed to maintain positive drainage.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

We established the final grade to ensure adequate drainage away from your home. Maintaining this drainage is the homeowners' responsibility. If you alter the drainage pattern after closing or if changes in drainage occur due to lack of maintenance, the limited warranty may be voided. Backfilled or excavated areas around the foundation and at utility trenches should not interfere with the drainage away from your home. If these areas settle more than allowable per NAHB performance guidelines during the first year, Berks Homes will fill the areas one time during the last four months of the warranty period.

### *Erosion*

Berks Homes is not responsible for weather-caused damage to yards after the final grade has been established. **After normal rainfalls, standing water should not remain in the yard for more than 24 hours nor 48 hours in swales.** No grading determination shall be made while there is frost or snow on the ground or while the ground is saturated.

Erosion is of special concern in drainage swales. If swales become filled with soil runoff, they may not drain the rest of the yard, causing further problems. Correcting erosion is your responsibility. You may need to reseed to establish grass in swales. It may take several years to fully establish your lawn in such challenging areas.

### *Swales*

Berks Homes does not alter drainage patterns to suit individual landscape plans. Typically, a lot receives water from and passes water to other lots, so changes in grade often affect adjacent or nearby lots. Berks Homes cautions you about making such changes without approval from your township and/or home owners association.

### *Winter Grading*

Due to weather conditions, especially during winter and early spring, the final grade may not have been established at the time of closing. We document the status of your grading at the time of delivery. When conditions permit, grading work will continue.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Landscaping

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Providing complete details on landscape design is beyond the scope of this manual. There are many excellent books, videos and websites that offer care and maintenance suggestions to promote the successful growth and health of any vegetation around your home. Local nurseries and landscape professionals can also assist you.

While designing your landscaping layout, consider proportion, texture, color, mature size, maintenance needs, soft and hard surfaces, lighting, fencing, edging and water requirements. A beautifully landscaped yard requires considerable planning and regular attention. Installing plant materials and surrounding surfaces over several seasons will disperse the cost and labor. Typically, it takes years to achieve the desired landscape appearance of a home.

### ***Hired Contractors***

You are responsible for changes to the drainage pattern made by any landscape, concrete, deck or pool contractor. Discuss drainage with any company you hire to do an installation in your yard. Do not permit them to tie into existing drainage pipes without proper approval.

Check with your township building department and/or homeowners association concerning regulations before designing, installing or changing landscaping.

### ***Backfill***

The area we excavated for your home's foundation was larger than the home to allow room to work. When the foundation walls were completed, the area surrounding them was backfilled. Soil in this area is not as compact as undisturbed ground. Backfilled areas will settle and may require additional soil in some areas.

Keep downspout extensions in the down position to channel roof runoff away from the foundation area of your home. Routine inspection of downspouts, backfill areas and other drainage components is an important part of home maintenance.

Do not allow edging around decorative rock or mulched beds to dam the free flow of water away from your home.

### ***Undisturbed Areas***

During construction, we removed construction debris from undisturbed areas. Removing dead wood, tree limbs, fallen trees and other natural items is the homeowner's responsibility.

## *Trees*

Berks Homes values trees as one of the features that beautifies our communities and adds value to the homes we build. We take steps to protect and preserve existing trees in the area of your home. In spite of our efforts, existing trees located on construction sites may suffer damage from construction activities, which manifest months after the completion of construction.

Damage to existing trees may be caused by soil compaction in the root zone, changes in water flow patterns, disturbance of root systems and necessary tree removal during excavation. Disturbing established trees may cause a threat to their health. Caring for existing trees, including pruning dead branches and removing trees as necessary or desired, is the homeowner's responsibility.

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Landscape materials we install are confirmed to be alive during your orientation or at time of substantial completion, as per NAHB performance guidelines. Maintaining landscaping is the homeowner's responsibility.

Berks Homes makes no guarantee for continued healthy growth of trees left in place on wooded lots.

## *Utility Lines*

**Before starting any significant digging, have all buried utility lines marked by calling Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc. (in PA) at 1-800-242-1776 or Miss Utility (in DE) at 1-800-282-8555. This is a free service that requires a minimum of notice of 3 working days. Save yourself time, trouble, injury and perhaps a fine. Call before you dig!**

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Lawn Care

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Your new starter lawn will require a great deal of care in order for the grass to thrive. To properly start your lawn, we recommend that you purchase a book on lawn and garden care.

The first step in establishing your lawn is watering to create a moist soil condition, preferably in the morning. **Water every day to maintain a moist surface for 20 to 30 days; this is very important.** The amount of water your lawn requires will vary depending on the type of soil you have, temperature, humidity, wind and amount of rain.

In hot weather, disease and fungus will attack wet grass, so allow time for grass to dry before nightfall.

## ***Over-seeding and Fertilizing***

Remember, the forces of nature are far stronger than grass seed. You will need to over-seed, perhaps more than once. Heavy storms may cause washouts and erosion that you will need to correct. It generally takes at least three growing seasons to establish a dense, healthy lawn, longer if weather conditions are extreme or if you do not have the time to devote to lawn care.

Before over-seeding or spot seeding, remember to fill any depressions or washed out areas with topsoil. Minimize traffic of all kinds on newly seeded areas. Keep the seed moist, not wet.

Your lawn will also need additional fertilization. Follow a lawn and garden care book or check with a lawn care specialist for the best time and method of applying fertilizers.

## ***Erosion***

Until your yard is established and stable, erosion will be a potential concern. Heavy rains or roof runoff may erode soil. The sooner you restore the grade to its original condition, the less damage will occur.

Erosion is of special concern in drainage swales. If swales become filled with soil runoff, they may not drain the rest of the yard, causing further problems. Correcting erosion is the homeowner's responsibility. You may need to reseed to establish grass in swales. It may take several years to fully establish your lawn in such challenging areas.

## ***Stones and Rocks***

The top soil in your area may have stones and rocks. Before seed, fertilizer and straw are spread, the top soil is machine raked followed by a hand surface raking. Despite machine and hand raking, additional stones and small rocks will surface as the ground settles. To establish and maintain a healthy lawn, it will be necessary for you to remove these stones and small rocks.



### *Undisturbed Areas*

During construction, we remove construction debris from undisturbed areas. Removing dead wood, tree limbs, fallen trees and other natural items is the homeowner's responsibility.

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Installation of your lawn will include a **one-time** machine and hand raking of the top soil, seeding, fertilizing and strawing all disturbed areas.

**Standing water should not remain in a yard for more than 24 hours nor 48 hours in a swale after a normal rainfall**, as per NAHB performance guidelines. Berks Homes is responsible for establishing the proper grades and swales on your property. Thereafter, it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain them.

Ground settlement around the foundation and utility trenches that affect proper drainage away from the house will be filled with top soil if an area has settled in accordance with the NAHB performance guidelines. This will be completed one time during the last four months of the warranty period.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# **Pests and Wildlife**

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Insects such as ants, spiders, wasps, and bees, and animal life such as woodpeckers, squirrels, mice, and snakes, may fail to recognize that your home belongs to you! It is important to address issues concerning pests and wildlife that invade your home as soon as possible.

Some informational resources include the state wildlife service, animal control authorities, the county extension service, pest control professionals, the Internet, and public library.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes has no control over insects or insect damage. The limited warranty coverage excludes extermination or insect damage.

# Property Boundaries

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

A copy of your property survey (plot plan) has been included in this section. The **proposed placement** of your home on your lot, location of each property pin, well and septic location (if applicable) and easements are shown on your plot plan.

Your property pins will be installed one time only by Berks Homes. The property pins will be set after a majority of the home sites in your phase have been permanently graded and seeded but no later than one year following settlement. If you wish to have pins installed sooner, you must incur the cost.

If you wish to install a fence, swimming pool, add a deck or patio, or otherwise establish a permanent structure, we advise that you wait until the property pins have been installed by our professional surveyors.

# Easements

## **Homeowner Use and Care Guidelines**

Easements are areas where such things as utility supply lines can pass through your property. They permit service to your lot and adjacent lots, now and in the future. Your lot will also include drainage easements, whereby the runoff from adjacent lots passes across your property. Likewise, water from your property may run across a neighboring lot. Easements are recorded and are permanent.

## **Nothing should be installed in an easement area.**

Utility companies, the United States Postal Service, townships and others have the right to disturb and install equipment in easements; for example, streetlights, mailboxes and junction boxes. Neither Berks Homes nor the homeowner has the authority to prevent, interfere or alter these installations. Plans for the location of such items are subject to change by the various entities involved. Because these businesses have no obligation to keep Berks Homes informed of such changes, we are unable to predict specific sites that will be affected in the future.

# Plumbing

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Your plumbing system consists of all water supply and drain lines, septic system (if applicable) and plumbing fixtures. The plumbing system has been installed to meet all applicable requirements and plumbing standards.

### ***Basement Construction***

If you decide to finish your basement, ensure that the plumbing lines are not isolated from the heating source without adding insulation.

### ***Cleaning***

Follow manufacturer's directions for cleaning fixtures. Avoid abrasive cleansers on faucets and fixtures. They may remove and scratch the finish and leave behind a porous surface that is difficult to keep clean. Clean plumbing fixtures with a soft sponge and soapy water. (Nonabrasive cleaners or liquid detergent is usually recommended by manufacturers.) Then polish the fixtures with a dry cloth to prevent water spots.

### ***Clogs***

The main causes of toilet clogs are domestic items such as disposable diapers, excessive amounts of toilet paper, sanitary supplies, Q-tips, dental floss and children's toys. Improper garbage disposal use also causes many plumbing clogs. Always use plenty of cold water when running the disposal. This recommendation also applies to disposing grease. Running a steady flow of cold water causes the grease to congeal allowing the blades to cut it easily and push it through the lines. If you use hot water, the grease remains a liquid, then cools and solidifies in the sewer line. Allow the water to run 10 to 15 seconds after shutting off the disposal.

You can usually clear clogged traps with a plunger. If you use chemical agents, follow directions carefully to avoid personal injury or damage to the pipes and fixtures.

### ***Fiberglass Fixtures***

For normal cleaning use a non-abrasive bathroom cleanser and sponge or cotton towel. Avoid steel wool, scrapers, and scouring pads. Auto wax can provide a shine and restore an attractive appearance to the fiberglass walls in your shower.

### *Freezing Pipes*

Provided your home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze at temperatures above 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Set the heat at a minimum of 58 degrees F if you are away during winter months.

### *Jetted Tubs*

If your home includes a jetted tub, follow manufacturer's directions for its use and care. **Never operate the jets unless the water level is at least two inches above the jets.** If you operate the motor without the outlets completely immersed, the seal will burn and leaking will occur. Do not use bubble bath or bath oils when operating the tub's jets to avoid overflowing suds or damage to the system. Be cautious about using the tub if you are pregnant or have heart disease or high blood pressure; discuss the use of the tub with your doctor.

### *Leaks*

If a major plumbing leak occurs, the first step is to turn off the water supply to the affected area. This may mean shutting off the water to your entire home. Then contact the plumbing trade contractor listed on your contact sheet.

If you find water stains on a ceiling beneath a bathroom, kitchen sink, laundry tub or washing machine, contact the plumbing trade contractor.

### *Low Flush Toilets*

We want to draw your attention to a water-saving regulation that went into effect in 1993, which prohibits manufacturing toilets that use more than 1.6 gallons of water per flush. In the search for a balance among comfort, convenience and sensible use of natural resources, the government conducted several studies. Overall, the 1.6-gallon toilet consistently saved water. Therefore, toilets installed in our homes comply with these regulations.

As a result of implementing this standard, flushing twice is occasionally necessary to completely cleanse and empty the toilet bowl. Despite occasionally flushing twice, an overall water saving is realized. Similarly, flow restrictors are manufactured into most faucets and all shower heads and cannot be removed.

Where public water is provided, water pressure often varies by individual municipalities and is not controlled by Berks Homes.

### *Running Toilet*

To stop running water, check the shut-off float in the tank. You will most likely find it has lifted too high in the tank, preventing the valve from shutting off completely. In this case, gently bend the float rod down until it stops the water at the correct level. The float should be free and not rub the side of the tank or any other parts. Also, check the chain on the flush handle. If it is too tight, it will prevent the rubber stopper at the bottom of the tank from sealing, resulting in running water.

### ***Main Shut-Off***

The water supply to your home can be shut off entirely in two locations: at the street and at the meter. Both locations are identified during your orientation.

### ***Exterior Faucet (hose bib)***

Exterior faucets (hose bib) are freeze-proof, but in order for this feature to be effective, you must remove hoses during cold weather. If a hose is left attached, the water remaining in the hose may freeze and expand back into the pipe causing a break in the line. Repair of a broken line that feeds an exterior faucet is a maintenance item.

**Note: Berks Homes does not warrant hose bibs against freezing.**

### ***Stainless Steel***

Clean stainless steel sinks with soap and water to preserve their luster. Avoid using abrasive cleaners or steel wool pads; these will damage the finish. Prevent bleach from coming into prolonged contact with the sink as it may pit the surface. An occasional cleaning with a good stainless steel cleaner will enhance the finish. Rub in the direction of the polish or grain lines and dry the sink to prevent water spots.

Avoid leaving produce on a stainless steel surface, since prolonged contact with produce can stain the finish. Also, avoid cutting food in the sink; sharp knives will gouge the finish.

Local water conditions affect the appearance of stainless steel. A white film may develop on the sink if you have over-softened water or water with a high concentration of minerals. In hard water areas, a brown surface stain may form appearing like rust.

### ***Water Filter or Softener***

If you install either a water filter or a water softener, carefully read the manufacturer's literature and warranty for your specific model.

If your home includes a septic system, prior to installing a water softener, discuss with the vendor whether the system you are considering will adversely affect your septic system.

**FOR EMERGENCIES, CONTACT YOUR PLUMBING TRADE CONTRACTOR, CONTACT INFORMATION IS LOCATED IN THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION OF THIS MANUAL.**

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS: PLUMBING**

### ***No Water Anywhere in the Home***

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Main shut-off on the meter inside your home is open.
- Main shut-off at the street is open.
- Individual shut-offs for each faucet, toilet and washing machine are open.

### ***No Hot Water***

See Water Heater

### ***Single Sink, Tub or Toilet Leak***

- Check caulking and grout.
- Confirm shower door or tub enclosure was properly closed.
- Use other facilities in your home.
- Close the shut-off (if applicable)
- Contact the plumber listed on your trade contractor call sheet.

### ***Exterior Faucets***

Berks Homes will repair leaks at exterior faucets noted on the orientation list. Subsequent to your orientation, repair of a broken line to an exterior faucet is not covered under the warranty.

### ***Freezing Pipes***

Provided your home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze. Set heat at 58 degrees F if you are away during winter months.

### ***Leaks***

Berks Homes will repair leaks in the plumbing system. If a plumbing leak caused by a warranted item results in drywall or floor covering damage, Berks Homes will repair or replace items that were part of your home as originally purchased. We do not make adjustments for secondary damages (for example, wallpaper, drapes and personal belongings) that are unavoidable from the repair, although precautions are taken to protect such articles. If secondary damage occurs, your homeowner's insurance should cover these items.

### ***Noise and Temperature***

Changes in temperature or the flow of the water itself will cause some noise in the pipes. This is normal and requires no repair. Berks Homes will correct loud hammering noises in the pipes. Expect temperatures to vary if water is used in more than one location in the home at the exact same time.



## ***Supply***

Berks Homes will correct construction conditions that disrupt the supply of water to your home if they involve service from the main water supply to your home provided your actions have not caused the problem. Disruption of service due to failure of the water department system is the responsibility of the water department to correct.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

## ***Main Line Leak***

- Turn water off at the meter in your home.
- Contact the plumber listed on your trade contractor call sheet.

## ***Back Up at One Toilet***

If only one toilet is affected,

- Shut off the water supply to the backed-up toilet.
- Use a plunger to clear the blockage.
- If you've been in your home fewer than 30 days, contact the plumber listed on your trade contractor call sheet.
- If you've been in your home over 30 days, Berks Homes is not responsible for clogs unless it is determined that faulty materials or inferior workmanship was apparent or the original installation was improperly completed.

## ***Sewer Back Up Affecting Entire Home***

- If you've been in your home fewer than 30 days, contact the plumber listed on your trade contractor call sheet.
- If you've been in your home over 30 days, Berks Homes is not responsible for clogs unless it is determined that faulty materials or inferior workmanship was apparent or the original installation was improperly completed.
- Remove personal belongings to a safe location. If items are soiled, contact your homeowner insurance company.

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that all plumbing fixtures are in acceptable condition and are functioning properly as per NAHB performance guidelines. All faucets and drains shall also operate freely.

Berks Homes will correct any fixture damage noted on the orientation list in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines. Repairing chips, scratches or other surface damage noted subsequent to your orientation list is considered cosmetic and not covered under the warranty.

### **Clogged Drain**

Berks Homes will correct clogged drains that occur during the first 30 days after closing. Thereafter, you are responsible for correcting clogged drains.

### **Exterior Faucets**

Berks Homes will repair leaks at exterior faucets noted on the orientation list. Subsequent to your orientation, repair of a broken line to an exterior faucet is not covered under the warranty.

### **Freezing Pipes**

Provided your home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze. Set heat at 58 degrees F if you are away during winter months.

### **Leaks**

Berks Homes will repair leaks in the plumbing system. If a plumbing leak caused by a warranted item results in drywall or floor covering damage, Berks Homes will repair or replace items that were part of your home as originally purchased. We do not make adjustments for secondary damages (for example, wallpaper, drapes and personal belongings) that are unavoidable from the repair, although precautions are taken to protect such articles. If secondary damage occurs, your homeowner's insurance should cover these items.

### **Noise and Temperature**

Changes in temperature or the flow of the water itself will cause some noise in the pipes. This is normal and requires no repair. Berks Homes will correct loud hammering noises in the pipes. Expect temperatures to vary if water is used in more than one location in the home at the exact same time.

### **Supply**

Berks Homes will correct construction conditions that disrupt the supply of water to your home if they involve service from the main water supply to your home provided your actions have not caused the problem. Disruption of service due to failure of the water department system is the responsibility of the water department to correct.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# **Tub Enclosures and Shower Doors**

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Shower doors and tub enclosures require minimal care. Using a squeegee to remove water after a bath or shower will keep mineral residue and soap film to a minimum.

Use mild, non-abrasive cleaning products to avoid any damage to the trim, hardware and fiberglass.

Avoid hanging wet towels on corners of doors; the weight can pull the door out of alignment and cause it to leak.

Check and touch-up caulking as needed.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm the good condition of all shower doors and tub enclosures in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines.

Berks Homes warrants that shower doors function according to manufacturer's specifications.

Berks Homes will correct any fixture damage noted on the orientation list as per NAHB performance guidelines. Repairing chips, scratches or other surface damage noted subsequent to the orientation list is considered cosmetic and is not covered under warranty.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Water Heater: Electric

## Homeowner Care and Maintenance

Carefully read the manufacturer's literature and warranty for your specific water heater model.

### *Drain Tank*

Review and follow the manufacturer's timetable and instructions for draining several gallons of water from the bottom of the water heater. This reduces build-up of chemical deposits from the water, thereby prolonging the life of the tank as well as saving energy dollars. While away from home or an extended period of time, set the temperature to the vacation setting. Carefully follow the instructions in the manufacturer's literature.

### *Element Cleaning or Replacement*

The heating elements in the water heater will require periodic cleaning. The frequency is determined in part by the quality of the water in your area. Again, refer to the manufacturer's literature for step-by-step instructions and drawings, or contact an authorized service company.

### *Safety*

Keep the area around the water heater clear of stored household items. Never use the top of the water heater as a storage shelf.

### *Temperature*

Temperature settings on an electric water heater will produce the approximate temperatures listed below:

Hot	120 degrees F
A	130 degrees F
B	140 degrees F
C	150 degrees F
Very Hot	160 degrees F

The recommended setting for operation of a dishwasher is B (140 degrees). Higher settings can waste energy dollars and increase the danger of injury from scalding. Hot water will take longer to arrive at sinks, tubs and showers located farther from the water heater.

## **TROUBLE SHOOTING TIPS: NO HOT WATER**

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Water heater breaker on your main electric panel is in the on position. (Remember! If a breaker trips, you must turn it from the tripped position to the off position before you can turn it back on.)
- Temperature setting is not on "vacation" or too low.
- Water supply valve is open.

Refer to the manufacturer's literature for specific locations of these items and possibly other troubleshooting tips.

**Even if the trouble shooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty**

Berks Homes warrants the operation of the water heater for one year. However, the manufacturer's warranty may exceed our warranty. Refer to the manufacturer's limited warranty for complete information regarding warranty coverage on your water heater.

# Water Heater: Gas

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's literature for your specific gas water heater model.

### *Drain Tank*

Review and follow manufacturer's timetable and instructions for draining several gallons of water from the bottom of the water heater. This reduces the build-up of chemical deposits from the water, prolonging the life of the tank and saving energy dollars.

### *Pilot*

Never light a gas pilot when the water heater tank is empty. Always turn off the gas before shutting off the cold water supply to the tank.

Water heaters sometimes collect small quantities of dirty water and scale in the main gas lines, which may put out the pilot light.

While away from home for an extended period of time, set the temperature to the "vacation" setting and leave the pilot lit.

### *Safety*

Vacuum the area around a gas-fired water heater to prevent dust from interfering with proper flame combustion. Never use the top of a heater as a storage shelf.

### *Temperature*

The recommended thermostat setting for normal everyday use is "normal." Higher settings can result in wasted energy dollars and increase the danger of injury from scalding. Hot water will take longer to arrive at sinks, tubs and showers located farther from the water heater.

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS: NO HOT WATER**

Before calling for service, check to confirm that the:

- Pilot is lit. (Directions will be found on the side of the tank.)
- Temperature setting is not on "vacation" or too low.
- Water supply valve is open.

Refer to the manufacturer's literature for specific locations of these items and possibly other troubleshooting tips.

**Even if the trouble shooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes warrants the operation of the water heater for one year. However the manufacturer's warranty may exceed our warranty. Refer to the manufacturer's limited warranty for information regarding coverage of the water heater.

# Septic System

## Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines

A septic system consists of two basic parts: a septic tank and an underground disposal field. Bacteria break down solids, forming a sludge that is moved by incoming water out to the disposal field, where it is filtered out into the soil. To help preserve the effectiveness of the system, keep these points in mind:

- Avoid disposing of chemicals such as solvents, oils, paint and excessive amounts of bleach through the septic system.
- Avoid using commercial drain cleaners. They can kill the bacteria that are working to break down the solid waste matter.
- Avoid disposing of any paper product (diapers, sanitary supplies, paper towels, etc.) other than toilet paper through the system.
- Do not rely on yeast or chemical additive to digest sludge. They are not an alternative to regular pumping and may actually harm the system.
- Drain surface water away from the disposal field. Eliminate unnecessary sources of water in the area of the disposal field.
- Conserve indoor water use to put less strain on the system. Correct leaky faucets or running toilets promptly. Keep in mind that a water softener will generate 30 to 85 gallons of water every regeneration cycle.
- Do not drive on the drainage field or build over it.
- Garbage disposal usage is not recommended.

## *Pumping the System*

Over time, the matter not broken down by the bacteria can clog the system. This will happen in spite of careful use and good maintenance. To prevent serious problems, regular pumping is essential to clean out the tank - usually every 2 years and more often if usage is heavy.

## *System Failure*

Signs that your septic system is failing include:

- Black water with a foul odor backing up in drains or toilets.
- Toilets flush slowly.
- Water ponds on top of the disposal field.

## *Water Softener*

Prior to installing a water softener, discuss with the vendor whether the system you are considering will adversely affect your septic system.



# Sump Pump

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

If the natural landscape of your lot does not allow the use of a gravity footer drain, your home will include a sump pump. The perimeter drain runs around the foundation to gather water and channel it to the sump pit (crock). When the water reaches a certain level, the sump pump automatically pumps the water out of the crock.

### ***Continuous Operation***

The pump may run often or even continuously during a heavy storm or long periods of rain. This is normal under such conditions.

During your orientation, we will point out the discharge location for your sump pump system. It is important to keep the end of the drain clear of debris so that water can flow out easily.

### ***Power Supply***

Because the sump pump runs on electricity, it cannot operate if power is lost. Storm water (not sewage) may possibly enter your basement. As a precautionary measure, you may consider installing a back-up system to guard against power outages. Homeowner's insurance does not usually cover property damage under such circumstances; you may want to obtain a rider for coverage.

It is also prudent to verify your sump pump is working after a power outage. (See "Routine Check" below.)

### ***Roof Water***

Ensure that roof water drains quickly away from your home to avoid circulating it through your sump pump. Keep downspout extensions or splash blocks in place to channel water away from your foundation.

### ***Routine Check***

Periodically check to confirm the pump is plugged in, the circuit breaker is on and the pump operates. To check the operation of your sump pump, pour five gallons of water into the sump pump crock (hole). The pump should come on and pump the water out. Follow this procedure once a year.

Avoid planting trees or shrubs with aggressive root growth patterns near your home's foundation. The roots can make their way into the perimeter drain and eventually clog the system.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will discuss the sump pump and confirm it is operational. The sump pump is warranted for one year by Berks Homes. However, a longer manufacturers' warranty may apply.

# Roofing

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

The roofing system on your home is your protection against the elements. You can ensure a comfortable and dry home by keeping it well maintained. Periodically inspect your roof shingles, chimney, caulking around vents, etc. Foot traffic on your roof may damage shingles. Binoculars are very useful for inspections while limiting or avoiding walking on the roof.

### ***Clean Gutters***

Maintain the gutters and downspouts by removing debris so they can quickly drain precipitation from the roof. Industry practice installs gutters approximately level with minimal pitch. Consequently, it is entirely possible that small amounts of water may remain in certain sections of your gutters for a time after a rain. Standing water will evaporate faster if the gutters are free of debris.

### ***Ice Dam***

During prolonged severe winter weather conditions, ice and snow build-up may occur. As rising heat from inside your home melts snow on the roof, the water runs down and when it reaches the cold eaves, it may freeze. Ice build-up may cause water to back up under the shingles and leak into your house. Ice build-up may also pull gutters loose; gutter guards may aggravate ice damming problems. If this occurs, you may want to install an electric gutter heating strip in susceptible areas.

### ***Limit Walking***

Bodily weight and movement as well as tools and ladders may loosen the roofing material and in turn result in leaks. Caution! Never walk on the roof when the shingles are wet; they are slippery.

### ***Leaks***

If a leak occurs, try to detect the exact location as soon as possible. This will greatly reduce potential interior damage as well as keep the repair cost to a minimum.

## **TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS: ROOF LEAK**

Please keep in mind that roof leaks cannot be repaired while the roof is wet. However, it is advisable to call your Warranty Department representative to report the leak. A work order will be issued; an inspection of the leakage will be made after the roof and weather conditions are dry.

In the meantime, investigate and confirm the source of the water is the roof rather than from a(n)

- ~ plumbing leak
- ~ open window on an upper level
- ~ ice dam
- ~ clogged gutter or downspout
- ~ blowing rain or snow coming in through code required roof vents
- ~ gap in caulking

Where practical, place a container under dripping water.

Remove personal belongings to prevent damage. If damage occurs, contact your homeowner's insurance company to submit a claim.

While under warranty, report the leak to Berks Homes during first available business hours. Thereafter, call a roofing professional as soon as possible with the details you have gathered from your investigation.

**Even if the troubleshooting tips do not identify a solution, the information you gather will be useful to the service provider you call.**

### **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

Berks Homes will repair roofing issues caused by defects in material or workmanship during your one year warranty period, as per NAHB performance guidelines. Roof repairs are made only when the roof is dry.

Roof shingles that lift, curl or tear loose during normal weather conditions will be repaired or replaced within the first year as per NAHB performance guidelines.

Leaks or damage caused by severe weather conditions, such as high winds, driving rain, hail damage, ice damming or some action you have taken, such as installing a satellite dish, is excluded from the limited warranty. Your homeowner's insurance may cover such damage.

Gutters may overflow during periods of excessively heavy rain. This is expected and requires no repair. Clear excess snow from downspouts as soon as possible to allow the gutter to drain and to prevent damage. Severe ice or snow build-up may damage gutters, and such damage is not covered by the limited warranty.

Attic vents and/or louvers must be provided to properly ventilate the home. Infiltration of rain or snow may enter the attic through these vents and louvers depending upon the force and direction of the wind. Berks Homes is not responsible for uncontrollable weather conditions and/or direction of driving rain or snow.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Rough Carpentry

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Floor squeaks and loose sub-floor boards are often temporary conditions common to new home construction. As your new home settles and seasonal moisture levels change, floor squeaks may stop on their own. Some floor and stair squeaks are unavoidable. Although Berks Homes does not guarantee squeak-free floors, a reasonable effort will be made to correct or reduce them.

All interior and exterior frame walls and ceilings have slight variations on the finish surface. Wood frame walls that are minimally out of square are not considered deficiencies.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

A squeak-proof floor cannot be guaranteed; an isolated floor squeak is not a defect. Squeaks caused by faulty construction that are structural deficiencies will be repaired one time during the warranty period as per NAHB performance standards.

### ***Floor Deflection***

Floors will deflect (bend) when walked on. This will be more noticeable when walking next to hutches, bookcases, pianos, chairs and other heavy furniture. This is not a structural deficiency and Berks Homes will take no action for this occurrence.

### ***Floor Level***

Uneven floor joists causing ridges or indentations exceeding NAHB performance standards will be corrected to meet the performance standards as described in your handbook.

### ***Bowed Walls or Ceilings***

Berks Homes will correct walls and ceilings bowing more than the allowable NAHB performance guidelines. Wood frame walls that are out of plumb in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines will be corrected to meet these performance guidelines.

# Interior Wood Trim

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Shrinkage of wood trim occurs during the first two years or longer, depending on temperature and humidity. All lumber is more vulnerable to shrinkage during the heating season. Maintaining a moderate and stable temperature helps to minimize the effects of shrinkage. Wood will shrink less lengthwise than across the grain. Wood shrinkage may result in separation at trim joints. You can usually correct this with caulking and touch-up painting with minimal notice.

Shrinkage may also cause a piece of trim to pull away from the wall. If this occurs, drive in another nail close to, but not exactly in, the existing nail hole. Fill the old nail hole with putty and touch up with paint as needed. If the base board appears to be lifting from the floor, this is probably due to slight shrinkage of the floor joists below.

Stained railings will show variation in the way the wood grain absorbed the stain. Some designs show seams where wood pieces are joined together to form the railing.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that the wood trim is in acceptable condition. Minor imperfections in wood materials will be visible and will require no action. Berks Homes will correct readily noticeable construction damage, such as chips and gouges listed during your orientation in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines.

Berks Homes will caulk separations in trim components that exceed NAHB performance guidelines. We provide this repair one time only in the first year. Caulking separated trim joints is an acceptable practice.

We will confirm that all railings are in good condition. Berks Homes installs railings in positions and locations to comply with applicable building codes. Railings should remain securely attached with normal use.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Exterior Wood Trim

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Exterior trim should be inspected annually to ensure it is tight and secure. Make sure the trim is painted as needed to protect it from the elements.

Since wood is porous material that absorbs and reacts to moisture, small hairline cracks or splits in exterior trim boards are natural.

Materials used to fill nail holes have a tendency to shrink and dry up over time. Fill recessed nail holes as required to impede water infiltration and damage to the wood.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation, we will confirm that the wood trim is in acceptable condition in accordance with NAHB performance guidelines. Minor imperfections in wood materials will be visible and will require no action. Berks Homes will correct readily noticeable construction damage, such as chips and gouges listed during your orientation.

Blistering or peeling exterior painted surfaces will be corrected as per NAHB performance guidelines. Exterior trim joints that open in excess of NAHB performance guidelines will be repaired in accordance to meet the performance guidelines.

**Refer to your copy of the NAHB Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for standards.**

# Caulking

## **Homeowner Use and Maintenance Guidelines**

Caulking has multiple purposes: to create a tight seal against moisture and air, to create a cosmetic seam and/or to bridge dissimilar materials. Time and weather will cause caulking to fail. As routine maintenance, check both the interior and exterior caulking and repair as needed. Local home centers and hardware stores stock caulking compounds and dispenser guns. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to be certain that you select an appropriate caulk for the intended purpose.

## **Berks Homes Limited Warranty Guidelines**

During your orientation we confirm that interior and exterior locations of your home have been appropriately caulked.

### ***One-Time Repair***

We will touch up caulking one time during your warranty period. We suggest that this be performed with your 9- to 11-month warranty service. Properly installed caulking will shrink and must be maintained by the homeowner for the life of the home.