

# Equity Home Builders, LLC.

## Homeowner Guide

### Exterior

- No matter what it says on the bag, even if you use it for a short period of time salt and deicing products will damage your exterior concrete. We recommend sand with no deicing products.
- Chipping ice on exterior concrete will damage the concrete.
- Be advised that power washing your driveway in late fall will cause excess moisture to be absorbed by the cement and when freezing conditions occur it may increase the amount of pitting that will occur in your cement. For additional protection against pitting caused by freezing and thawing changes that occur you will want to apply a concrete sealer on your driveway, sidewalk and approach.
- Your concrete driveway and sidewalk is a floating slab which means it moves up when the ground freezes and it moves back down when the ground thaws. It will crack, pop, and flake, however, to minimize the popping and flaking it is recommended that after the concrete driveway and sidewalk has properly cured that you seal the concrete to prevent it from excessive popping and flaking. When sealing the concrete, try not to unnecessarily seal over big oil stains or other marks like chalk marks from hop scotch because it will make them permanent.
- Weep holes are small holes in the mortar along the lower row of brick or stone. These holes allow moisture that has accumulated behind the brick to escape. Do not fill these weep holes or permit landscaping materials to cover them.
- Efflorescence is a white powdery substance that sometimes accumulates on brick surfaces. In some cases, it can be removed with a soft brush. You may also contact the masonry store where your brick was purchased for products to remove it.
- Downspouts on gutters need to be left down to keep the water away from the foundation.
- Over time, dirt will settle along the foundation. This must be filled in so the water runs away from the foundation. Dirt will also settle under the front step. Don't pack dirt too tight under the step otherwise when frost expansion occurs in the wintertime it could push the brick step up. Do not worry about the step settling because it is resting on both the foundation and stoop ledge.
- The pea rock in the window wells must be kept clean. It takes very little dirt to clog up the pea rock which will prevent the water from draining through the pea rock. If the pea rock gets clogged it doesn't take much water to start filling up the window wells causing the water to run under the basement window and allowing the basement carpet to get wet.
- Sump hoses will freeze when it gets cold out. Remove sump pump hoses and if available have sump pump diverter valve installed to discharge sump water into city sewer. You may need to contact the city to get a permit to discharge into the city sewer. Otherwise, use approx 3' of PVC pipe blocked up 8" off the ground to keep water away from the foundation during freezing temperatures.
- Remember to disconnect your garden hose from your exterior faucets before the weather turns colder and begins to freeze to prevent frost buildup inside the hose from working its way up into the faucet which will damage your exterior faucets and cause them to leak.
- If you have an underground sprinkler system installed you must have it drained and blown out every fall or it will freeze and damage your sprinkler system.
- If curb edging is installed, make sure downspout extenders are installed to get water from the gutters over the curb edging. Also, drain tile should be set under the curb edging to help keep rain water from damming up behind the curb edging.
- Siding warranty is handled by the siding manufacturer and siding distributor.

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- Keep hot objects away from vinyl siding. For instance, when using a cooking grill the grill must first cool off before you place the grill close to the siding or the siding will melt.
- Vinyl siding is installed loose by design so it can expand and contract. During windy times you may hear the siding chatter.
- For homes with seamless steel siding, you will hear the siding expand and contract when the sun shines on the siding and again when the siding cools down after the sun is no longer shining on it.
- Do not remove or cut siding when installing a deck as this will increase the likely hood that you will get a water leak.
- When digging holes in the ground for planting trees, building fences, installing a deck, etc. always make sure to call for underground locates.
  - If the ground around the house shrinks and pulls away from the house because of excessive dry weather do not fill in the space because when the ground gets wet again it will expand and put undue pressure on the foundation.
- Clean the lint and debris out of the clothes dryer vent on the exterior of the house this will help to reduce fire risk, keep excessive moisture out of the house, and help your clothes dryer work more efficiently.
- Keep your gutters clear of debris.
- If you do your own finish grade make sure and call for rear yard grade to ensure you have proper yard drainage.
- GFCI (Ground-Fault Circuit-Interrupters) 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 bathrooms, the kitchen, outside, and the garage (areas where an individual can come into contact with water while holding an electric appliance or tool). One GFCI breaker can control up to three or four outlets. Therefore, if an GFCI breaker trips it may effect multiple outlets. If an outlet in your home is not working it may be that the GFCI breaker associated with that outlet needs to be reset. The GFCI breaker may be located in a room other than that room that the nonfunctioning outlet is located in . Each GFCI breaker has a test and reset button. If the GFCI circuit has tripped you will need to press the reset button to return service to the outlet.

Heavy appliances such as freezers or power tools will trip the GFCI breaker. If you intend to use an outlet in the garage, basement, or any other area for a freezer, an additional fridge or for using power tools it is highly recommended that you have a dedicated circuit installed for these items. That way, if the GFCI breaker is tripped by an outlet that is not controlling that particular item it will not have an effect on the appliance or outlet that has its own dedicated circuit. If you do have an appliance, such as a freezer or fridge plugged into a circuit that is shared, if any outlet tied to that GFCI is tripped it may trip all of the outlets tied to that circuit. Which would mean that it is highly likely that the contents in the freezer and fridge would be ruined or may be spoiled.

***Caution: Never plug a refrigerator or food freezer into a GFCI-controlled outlet. The likelihood of the contents being ruined is high.***

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## Garage

- If your garage door opener does not go down all of the way the most likely problem is that there is a visual obstruction in the electric eye of the safety sensor or the sensors are not aligned properly. Examples of items that may get in the way or cause the sensors to not work properly are dirty lenses, bright sunshine, snow, shovels, brooms, rope, vehicles, etc. Before you leave your home, make sure that your overhead door shuts and stays down.
- In a hard driving rain the garage service door and the garage overhead doors will not stop 100% of the rain from getting under the doors.
- If you have a garage floor drain you may need to clean the sand trap out occasionally. Especially, if your vehicle leaves a lot of dirt, mud or sand on the garage floor.
- If you ever smell sewer gas in the garage area the plumbing trap in the garage floor drain may have dried out. If this occurs you will need to add water to the drain and air out the garage to remove the smell. If this does not clear up the smell you will need to call a plumber.
- If you are insulating and sheetrocking your own garage, make sure that you properly install soffit chutes. Also, if you are going to install a gas space heater you should have the exhaust B vent installed by a professional before you sheetrock the ceiling. Make sure to keep insulation off of the B vent. When installing backing for sheetrock or when installing sheetrock be careful not to damage any electrical wires as this may cause a fire hazard.
- If your garage is tape, textured, and painted, you must at all times keep the garage heated and you must keep the garage from freezing or you will get excessive cracking and the taping may no longer adhere to the sheetrock. Do not let your garage freeze. Even without the garage freezing, you are likely to get some cracks in the seams of the sheetrock because of extreme temperature variations when the garage doors are opened and closed during the winter time. Since all cracking in the garage cannot be prevented, builder will not include drywall crack repair in the garage under the one year warranty. You can keep the cracking to a minimum if you shut the overhead doors as quickly as possible when it is cold outside.
- Always keep functioning fire extinguishers on site. The kitchen, garage, laundry room, and mechanical rooms are some good locations to place fire extinguishers.
- If painting, staining, finishing millwork or using any combustible materials never keep rags that have the combustible material on them in your house, garage, or any enclosed area. Spontaneous combustion is very likely to occur and is an extreme fire hazard.
- Ashes from fire pits, grills, or fireplaces should never be kept in the house, garage, or on your deck. Also, never use hot oil cookers/burners for cooking in or near the house or garage.
- Do not pound exposed nails in the garage back out or you may damage the siding or brick.
- When mounting anything in the garage be very careful to make sure that you do not nail or screw into any pipes or wires.
- Snow and ice on the garage floor is very slippery so keep your garage floor clean and be careful.
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- All of the door knobs and deadbolts for your home are suppose to be keyed alike. However, occasionally we get a faulty key or lock from the manufacturer. Please check all keys immediately so you do not lock yourself out of your house.
- Exterior door thresholds are self-adjusting.
- All exterior doors have adjustable strike plates and may need to be adjusted as the house expands and contracts due to changes in humidity and temperature.
- Window warranty is handled by the window manufacturer and distributor. There is a 1 year warranty on stress cracks and a 10 year warranty on seal failures.
- In the wintertime, moisture runs from heat and runs to cold. One of the main places that moisture collects is on exterior door hinges. You must keep the hinges wiped off and lubricated in order to keep the exterior hinges from rusting.
- The most preventive measure that can be taken on exterior door maintenance items is having a quality storm door installed.
- Remember to keep snow and other debris out of window wells to allow you to use your escape window.
- Due to wet conditions, rough grading of yards may not be completed until very late in the year. Besides weather delays, other delays in rough grading may be caused by spring time county road restrictions and landscaper's yearly springtime backlog. To ensure that your yard is not delayed any longer than necessary, please make sure that sump pump hoses are extended out to the rear yard drain, if available, or to the front curb of the street.

## Interior

- ***Moisture runs from heat and runs to cold. This is very important to remember when you are trying to control humidity levels in your home.***
- When windows get cold in the winter moisture or condensation will begin to collect on the glass and hardware of the window. You must continually check on all your windows for excessive moisture. To remove moisture from the windows you will need to increase air flow by windows and to remove excess moisture from the air in the house. The following steps can be taken to increase air flow by windows:
  - Make sure the heat registers by the windows are open. They should not be closed, blocked, covered, or obstructed in any way.
  - Make sure all window blinds are lifted up high enough or curtains are left open enough to allow air flow by the windows in order to keep the excessive moisture off the windows.
  - The thermostat on the wall can be set so that the furnace fan runs continually. This does not mean that the furnace is heating continually. The furnace will still heat/function as it normally would based on the setting of the thermostat. However, the circulating fan will be running all the time increasing air flow throughout the house.
  - Turn down the humidistat on the Whole House Humidifier, if you have one installed.
  - You can partially close a few heat registers that are not near windows, this will increase the air flow through the ones that are by the windows.
  - In extreme conditions, a small fan can be set up to increase air flow by the most problem windows.
  - Never use a blow dryer or any other heat source directly on windows as this will cause them to crack.
- If the humidity level in the house is too high during the winter here are some suggestions to decrease the humidity in your home:
  - If you have a Whole House Humidifier, check the setting and turn it down if you need to.
  - Check to see if your clothes dryer filter and vent (both on the inside and outside) are clear of lint and debris. Also, make sure that the exhaust hose is not kinked. You should check this regularly even if you do not have excessive moisture in your home.
  - Check to make sure your furnace filter is clean.
  - Run a dehumidifier. If your basement is unfinished you must leave your temporary doors shut to the basement to keep the moisture from the upstairs living areas from getting into the downstairs. You must also run a dehumidifier in the unfinished part of your basement.
  - You can also open a window a small amount when it is cold out to decrease the humidity in your home because the moisture will run from the heat in the house and run to the cold outside.
  - In worst case scenarios, some people have had to install cold air exchangers.
- Keep in mind that you do not want your house to get too dry either. If it is too dry in your home it will become uncomfortable, but more importantly the woodwork will shrink too much. It is a catch 22 situation. Too much moisture will cause problems with the woodwork and hardware on windows and exterior doors, and too little moisture will cause problems with your millwork and cause your hardwood floor to shrink too much. Therefore, controlling the humidity level in your home is very important. Remember, the only people that can control the humidity level the home are the people living in the home. It is important that you monitor the humidity in all parts of the house and make adjustments as the temperatures outside change and as the humidity levels inside the house change. The colder it is outside the more moisture will be attracted to the exterior windows and doors on the house. Also the colder it is outside the more the furnace will be running and drying out the air in the house. A good gauge of the correct humidity level is that if it is cold outside and you are doing all of the above mentioned airflow strategies you should not have more than a 1/2" of moisture collecting on the perimeter of your windows. Yet to keep your hardwood floors from shrinking too much you need to try to keep your humidity at a comfortable level. If you notice that your hardwood floor is slightly shrinking, that is not uncommon. However, if you notice excessive shrinkage of your hardwood floor increase the humidity level in the house by turning up the Whole House Humidifier, if you have one, or by running a free standing humidifier until you notice a little moisture gathering on the perimeter of the windows. Hardwood floors that shrink slightly will typically return to close to their original size, but hardwood floors that shrink excessively will probably not return to their original size.
  - Once again, just a reminder that the only people that can control the humidity in the house are the people that are living in the house. Therefore, only the people living in the home can keep the hardwood floors and millwork from shrinking if the moisture level is too low, and they are also the only people that can prevent the millwork around the windows and the window jambs from being damaged

due to too much moisture in the home.

- Millwork around the windows should also be monitored. If any moisture runs off the windows and on to the millwork it should be wiped dry to prevent permanent damage to the woodwork or mold from occurring. If there is too much moisture on the windows you will need to increase the airflow by the windows to rectify the situation.
- If you are going to leave your house for an extended period of time in the winter you will either need to operate an Whole House Humidifier or have someone stop by on occasion to run a free standing humidifier.
- If the window extension jambs shrink on the windows, use a non-yellowing clear caulk to fill in the gap between the extension jamb and the windows. Wipe off excess caulk with a wet towel.
- To avoid any problems with your furnace during the winter months, be sure to have your furnace serviced annually. If you have an Whole House Humidifier you must have it serviced annually because of calcium and other minerals in the water.
- If your furnace quits when it is very cold outside and the wind is swirling the snow around it is possible that the furnace intake pipe is blocked with snow and ice. It can easily be unblocked. Sometimes it is as easy as removing the angle PVC pipe and clearing out the snow or ice that is blocking the airflow.
- Remember that central air units take moisture out of the air in the summer and Whole House Humidifiers put moisture in the air in the winter. You must not run both units at the same time. When you start using the central air conditioning unit in the summer remember to turn off the Whole House Humidifier. Then, when you need to add humidity in the winter you should gradually turn up the Whole House Humidifier.
- Fireplaces without a pilot light but with an electronic ignition need to be started up and ran when it is cold out to burn off the moisture in the chimney. Otherwise, excessive ice will build up in the chimney and start melting down or even crash down.
- 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 dissimilar ones. You will see the effects in small cracks in the drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners, and where tile grout meets the tub or sink. While this can alarm an uninformed homeowner, it is normal.

Shrinkage of the wood members of your home 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 you need to conceal this minor evidence of a natural phenomenon. Even though properly installed, caulking shrinks and cracks. Maintenance of caulking is your responsibility.

Slight cracking, screw and nail pops, or seams may become visible in walls and ceilings. There are caused by shrinkage of the wood and normal deflection of rafters to which the drywall is attached. With the exception of the one-time repair service provided by the builder, care of drywall is your maintenance responsibility. Most drywall repairs can be easily made. This work is best done when you redecorate the room. Truss deflection is a phenomenon that happens in all houses in northern climates. Typically, the longer the truss the more noticeable the deflection. This occurrence is not covered by any warranty.

Repair hairline cracks with a coat of paint. You can repair slightly larger cracks with spackle or paintable caulk. To correct a screw pop, remove the texture that is covering the screw, remove the screw, then move the screw about 1" above or below the original screw location and countersink it until it is just barely below the surface of the sheetrock. Cover it with spackle, which is available at paint and hardware stores. Apply 2-3 thin coats. When dry, sand the surface with a fine-grain sandpaper, apply spray texture if needed, then paint. To correct a nail pop, remove the texture that is covering the nail, reset the nail with a hammer and punch. Cover it with spackle, which is available at paint and hardware stores. Apply 2-3 thin coats. When dry, sand the surface with a fine-grain sandpaper, apply spray texture if needed, then paint. You can fill indentations caused by sharp objects in the same manner.

During the walkthrough, we confirm that drywall surfaces are in acceptable condition.

During the one time repair, we will repair drywall shrinkage cracks and nail/screw pops and will touch up the repaired area using the same paint color that was on the surface when the home was delivered. Touch-ups will be visible. Repainting the entire wall or the entire room to correct this is your choice and responsibility. You are also responsible for custom paint colors or wallpaper that has been applied subsequent to closing. Due to the effects of time on paint and wallpaper, as well as possible dye lot variations, touch-ups are unlikely to match the surrounding area. We do not repair drywall flaws that are only visible under particular lighting conditions.

- When the mirrors arrive from the distributor they typically have some slight blemishes which are made more apparent due to the location and direction of the bright light from the bathroom light fixtures.
- When using new appliances for the first couple of times it is a good idea to stay home and keep an eye on them. You never know if there is a plastic fitting or some other defect from the factory that could cause water damage or flood your home. All appliance warranties are handled by the appliance manufacturer and appliance distributors.
- If leaving the house for an extended period of time it is a good idea to shut off the water to the house at the water meter. Remember, when your water is on your pipes and fittings are under pressure 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Always check your sump pump at least twice a year to ensure it is functioning properly. Remember, when your sump pump goes out it does not warn you so it is important to periodically check it.
- Always check your sump pump interior connection in the Spring to ensure it is still securely fastened.
- Most of our houses with deep basements will have two sump pits and two sump pumps. There is a primary and a secondary one of each. Typically, the secondary sump pump will only run if the primary sump pump fails. The secondary sump pit will still hold some groundwater in the bottom of the pit and over time it may begin to smell musty. Lifting the handle up on the sump pump float with a wooden stick will usually alleviate the smell, but you may need to pour enough water into the pit to flush out the musty water out of the system. When replacing the cover of the sump pits make sure the electrical cords do not become tangled in the float of the pump preventing the float from working properly.
- Remember approximately where your sewer clean out location is in your basement.
- Remember where your sewer check valve location is. If you have a sewer drainage problem the check valve is a good place to check first, but be careful! Do not check the sewer check valve during flood conditions. If your sewer is backing up and the check valve is doing its job, and you unscrew the check valve cover it could explode up into your face and hurt you or flood your basement.
- If your basement smells like sewer gas it is probable a sewer trap that has dried out. It is likely the floor drain in the mechanical room, but it could also be from a seldom used drain trap in a sink or tub. Pour water down it and open up some windows. If that does not solve the problem it could be a blocked sewer vent pipe on the roof. This would be more likely to happen in the winter when it could freeze over. Make sure that it is not natural gas or propane that you are smelling. If you think it could be natural gas or propane do not switch any light on or off, do not use the phone or any electrical device that could cause a spark which could result in an explosion. Just leave the house immediately and call for the utility company or authorities from a neighbor's house. Do not go back into the house until the proper utility company or authorities tell you it is OK to do so.
- If you smell sewer as when it is very cold outside it is possible that your roof sewer vents are frozen shut. They will need to be cleaned out and unplugged.
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water while holding an electric appliance or tool). One GFCI breaker can control up to three or four outlets. Therefore, if a GFCI breaker trips it may effect multiple outlets. If an outlet in your home is not working it may be that the GFCI breaker associated with that outlet needs to be reset. The GFCI breaker may be located in a room other than that room that the nonfunctioning outlet is located in. Each GFCI breaker has a test and reset button. If the GFCI circuit has tripped you will need to press the reset button to return service to the outlet.

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- If you are installing a deck or finishing your basement, be sure to get all required building permits and inspections. It will prevent you from running into problems when you sell your house at a later date.
- When finishing your basement check for floor squeaks upstairs before your sheetrock downstairs. Over time wood items dry out and shrink which may cause floor squeaks to occur. It is advised that you check for floor squeaks before the basement is sheetrocked.
- When finishing your basement remember it is always approximately 10 degrees cooler downstairs than upstairs so you may want to consider adding a supplemental heat source in your basement bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Remember to change your batteries in your smoke detector regularly. They typically suggest to change them twice a year when you change your clock for daylight savings time. If your smoke detectors are making a chirping sound it is typically due to a low battery. Smoke detectors are not carbon monoxide detectors. If you would like a combination smoke and carbon monoxide detector installed in an area or areas, please let us know. For a small fee the electrician will be happy to install them for you.
- Never use any soap or cleaner that is not approved for hardwood flooring on the hardwood floor or you may damage the finish. You can use a slightly damp cloth or you can purchase a hardwood floor cleaning kit at most home improvement stores.
- Real hardwood floors are a natural product. When viewed as a whole, they provide the customer with a very beautiful and rich looking floor. However, extremely close scrutiny will always reveal some imperfections in the product. Customers need to be aware that the imperfections such as nicks, scratches, and slivers in this natural product are unavoidable and that the builder cannot be held to an unrealistic standard.
- Keep excess water off of the hardwood flooring. Watch closely around the kitchen sink, the dishwasher and the water dispenser area on the fridge for any water or liquid that is spilled. Immediately wipe up any spills on the hardwood flooring.



- When rolling out your fridge on a hardwood floor always roll it out on a ¼” piece of underlayment to prevent the fridge wheels from scuffing the hardwood floor.
- Remember to replace the filter for your ice maker and water dispenser on your fridge.
- The Carpet Rug Institute (CRI) requires that for the carpet warranty to be valid you must have the carpets professionally cleaned every 12 months and that you retain the receipt provided by the professional cleaner.
- Keep pet nails cut short if you have hardwood flooring as their nails may scratch the hardwood floors.
- Remember that all woodwork darkens over time. This will cause a difference in the color of the hardwood floor if a rug, piece of furniture, or some other object is placed in a specific area over a period of time. When an item is placed on the hardwood floor for an extended period of time and then removed, the area that was covered will appear to be a lighter color than the rest of the hardwood floor and there will be a noticeable variation in the color.
- After the millwork has darkened over time, the nail putty that was used to fill the nail holes will become more noticeable. That is because the wood darkens but the putty remains the same color as when it was applied.
- If you have hidden hinges on your cabinet doors you will be able to adjust the reveals and cross views of the doors. This is an easy and convenient way to keep your cabinet doors shutting nicely even though they may be shrinking and expanding due to the changing humidity levels in your home.
- Just like exterior doors, interior door strike plates can be adjusted to allow the doors to shut properly despite the shrinking and expanding of the millwork due to the changing humidity levels in your home.
- On double doors (such as the closet doors) the ball catches on the top of the door can be adjusted by simply removing them and turning them either clockwise or counter clockwise as needed and then reinstalling them.
- When mounting items such as TV’s and garage heaters care must be taken to prevent hitting electrical wires, TV and phone cables, as well as pipes running through the walls. If possible, try to use screws and bolts no longer than 2”, if you can use shorter ones that is best.

**Additional Note:**

During the first year in your new home, we recommend that you keep a list of defective material or workmanship that was not done according to industry standards. In that one year time period, your house will expand and contract due to the environment fluctuating from 30 below to 100 degrees above zero and humidity fluctuating between 10% and 90%. After one year, contact us with the list of items you would like addressed and we will arrange to have the appropriate supplier, subcontractor, or repair person to address the issues. Please remember it is up to the homeowner to do all the required maintenance and preventative care in order for the one year warranty to remain in effect.

Please sign below to acknowledge that you have received a copy of this document and that you have reviewed and understand the information provided in the document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Buyer’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Buyer’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Initials

\_\_\_\_\_ Initials