



# Homeowners

## Care Guide



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## Homeowners Care Guide

The basic information enclosed in this home care guide are exact to the best of Lemay Homes' knowledge, however, this content is uniquely to be used as a general guide.

Homeowners are reminded not to contact third party service companies for items still covered during the warranty period, as Lemay Homes cannot be held responsible for these charges. However, after the warranty period is over you may certainly contact the sub-trade or contractor of your choice.

Please find below other useful web links:

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation :

[http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/gemare/gemare\\_003.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/gemare/gemare_003.cfm)

Tarion: <http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Maintaining-Your-New-Home.aspx>

### Air conditioner:

- Have your unit professionally serviced annually in order to maintain proper and efficient cooling of your home during the warm seasons.

### Air exchanger:

- Follow the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines.
- Clean or change the filter according to manufacturer recommendations. This will make the furnace/mechanical system more energy efficient and use less energy.
- Usually this means, at the very least, clean the filter in Spring and Fall.
- Do not forget to clean the exterior air intake also.

### Asphalt:

- The paved entrance is meant for cars or light utility vehicles but not for heavy loads such as trailers or large vehicles. Heavy loads will damage the asphalt surface. Sharp objects such as bicycle or motorcycle stands may sink in the asphalt especially during hot weather.
- Dry land steering your vehicle wheels may leave marks especially during hot weather.
- Salt & de-icing chemicals may damage the paved surface. Use sand or fine gravel instead.
- Gas and oil also damages asphalt. Rinse and clean adequately immediately upon appearance of oil or gas stains.

## Bath tubs and showers - acrylic:

- See manufacturers maintenance guide. As a general rule, use a mild and non abrasive solution to avoid scratching the acrylic surfaces, such as dishwashing liquid. Some household cleaners are much too strong and can damage the acrylic by scratching and removing the acrylic's lustre with repeated use.
- Regular caulking is also needed in order to avoid water infiltration. (REFER to the "Caulking" section).

## Bathrooms:

- Use fan continuously during baths and/or showers, and leave on long enough afterwards to permit complete evacuation of humidity.

**Cabinets and countertops** Please find below some basic maintenance guides for cabinets and/or countertops made of wood, MDF (medium density fiber panels), Thermofoil/Laminates/Melamine, granite, quartz, Corian, butcher block.

As a general rule:

- Do not stand or sit on the countertop
- Wipe spills immediately (to avoid staining of any type of surface and/or swelling in the case of laminated surfaces)
- Use cutting boards
- Use protective pads for hot items or appliances
- Avoid exposing the surfaces to harsh chemicals such as toilet bowl cleaners, drain cleaners, rust removers, ceramic cooktop cleaners, acidic or abrasive cleaners, oven cleaners, paint or varnish removers, products containing acetone (nail polish remover) which may mark or permanently damage the surfaces. In the event of such a spill, as a general rule, wipe off the excess of the product immediately and rinse several times with water, using the appropriate safety measures to avoid injury.
- Cabinet interiors should be cleaned with a damp cloth and dried immediately with a dry soft cloth.

**Each type of finish requires its own particular maintenance therefore it is best to refer to the manufacturer's recommendations.**

Please find below some maintenance guidelines for some finishes:

- **WOOD & MDF:**
  - All wood surfaces require proper climate control. Excessive humidity is every surface's worst enemy.
  - REFER to « Humidity control» section for IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

- Regular cleaning of wood surfaces must be done with a clean, damp cloth and dried immediately with a dry, soft cloth. (Do not use detergents, strong soaps, abrasives, or self-polishing waxes.)
- **THERMOFOIL/LAMINATE/MELAMINE :**
  - Laminate countertops are not as durable as granite, quartz or solid surface materials thus common sense is required to avoid serious damage.
  - Regular cleaning of thermofoil doors should be done with a mild soap and water solution and dried immediately with a dry, soft cloth.
  - For daily cleaning of laminate countertops simply wipe with a soapy cloth and immediately wipe off any remaining residue and excess liquids with a dry cloth.
  - Avoid moisture/water/liquids on countertop seams, joints, backsplashes and sink &/or faucet openings. Dry moisture/Remove liquid spills immediately with a dry cloth.
  - Wipe up standing water/liquids immediately; to prevent from seeping around sinks, faucets, backsplashes or seams/joints, as this may cause the material to swell, lift or separate.
  - Kettles, toasters, toaster ovens, and other heat generating accessories cannot be placed under cabinetry when in use. Also, keeping the dishwasher door open after a hot cycle wash is not recommended. Prolonged heat exposure will cause de-lamination.
  - Laminated cabinets and countertops are not heat resistant; therefore, do not expose them to direct heat (e.g. teapot, frying pans) or heat-generating appliances (e.g. toaster under upper cabinets which may damage upper cabinets; electric skillets/crock pots directly on the countertop). Always make sure that toaster and/or other heating appliances are not under any cabinets when in use, and/or use protective pads under hot appliances, teapots, etc.
  - Do not put hot items directly on the laminated surface, always use protective pads.
  - Use a cutting board for all food preparation. Do not cut directly on countertop.
  - Do not stand or sit on the countertop.
- **GRANITE :**
  - There is no warranty on the stone itself, it is a natural product and sometimes will contain fissures and small cracks that do not affect the integrity of the stone. Defects in workmanship are covered by each supplier's warranty.
  - Contact our local distributor for professional assistance if you experience any scratches or chips. Some stones are softer and more porous than others and are more susceptible to stains and scratches.
  - Remove watermarks simply by wiping with liquid soap and damp cloth.
  - DO NOT USE any abrasive cleaners or harsh chemicals for day to day care.
  - Granite withstands heat well beyond what other surfaces can but certain stones may be susceptible to thermal shock and cracking if high heat is suddenly applied to an area. However, be advised that heat transmitted to granite will hold its temperature long after the removal of the heated cookware. Protective pads are recommended to prevent potential burns.
  - We recommend you do not cut on your granite surface as it can scratch. It is always advisable to use a cutting board

- Do not apply extra weight to your granite top. Standing on the surface in order to reach higher placed objects, or leaning on areas that have been cutout for sinks, cooktops etc, may result in cracking.
- Do not stand or sit on the countertop.
- **QUARTZ :**
  - Although quartz is a highly durable manufactured product, it may be damaged if misused.
  - Quartz is a manufactured product typically made up of 93% Quartz and 7% resin. Defects in product and workmanship are covered by each supplier's warranty.
  - Remove watermarks simply by wiping with liquid soap and damp cloth.
  - DO NOT USE any abrasive cleaners or harsh chemicals for day to day care.
  - Contact our local distributor for professional assistance if you experience any scratches or chips.
  - Quartz will withstand heat well but may be susceptible to thermal shock and cracking if high heat is suddenly applied to an area. It's important to note that quartz is a poor conductor of heat. This means that an area introduced to heat will hold its temperature long after removal of heated cookware creating a potential for burns. Protective pads are recommended.
  - We recommend you do not cut on your quartz surface as it can scratch. It is always advisable to use a cutting board.
  - Do not apply extra weight to your quartz top. Standing on the surface in order to reach higher placed objects, or leaning on areas that have been cutout for sinks, cooktops etc, may result in cracking.
  - Do not stand or sit on the countertop.
- **CORIAN :**
  - Soapy water or ammonia-base cleaners will remove most dirt and grime.
  - Avoid exposing Corian surface to strong chemicals such as paint remover and oven cleaner. If contact of such chemicals occurs, rinse away quickly with water.
  - Scratches: Contact your local distributor or visit their website at ([www.corian.com](http://www.corian.com)) for more information.
  - Protective pads are recommended for prolonged exposure to hot items.
  - Use a cutting board for the preparation of food.
  - Do not stand or sit on the countertop.
- **BUTCHER BLOCK :**
  - Wash with lukewarm water – do not submerge in water – and immediately wipe dry.
  - Apply a fresh coat of mineral oil, or Beeswax meant for butcher block tops monthly, or as needed.
  - Do not place hot items on surface
  - Do not allow water spills or other liquid to sit on surface for a period of time. Wipe immediately.
  - Cutting on the top will mark the surface.
  - There is no warranty when installing a sink in a solid wood top.

## Caulking:

- Regularly maintain the caulking around faucets, sinks, bathtubs and showers in order to prevent water infiltration.
- Regularly maintain the caulking around doors and windows, air exhausts, electrical outlets, garage frame, etc. Repair as required to prevent water infiltration.

## Cement:

- Salt & de-icing chemicals do not agree with cement surfaces. They cause scaling of the surface. Use sand or fine gravel instead.

## Condensation:

Moisture is present in all homes, but when it becomes excessive, homeowners need to take immediate action to protect their new home investment.

**Also refer to the section entitled “*HUMIDITY CONTROL*” for related and very important information.**

Condensation is water that forms when warm, moist air or excessive humidity levels hit a cooler surface in a room such as a window, an interior door knob that is located on an exterior door, a cold water pipe, and/or basement concrete walls.

- Cold weather and condensation (for example- windows in the winter) can easily be fixed with these few tricks :
  - Limit the quantity of plants in the home
  - Verify dryers air exhaust pipe to assure proper connection and free of laundry lint
  - Avoid lowering the interior temperature too low
  - Avoid stock piling firewood in the basement
  - Use kitchen and bathroom fans when cooking and showering/bathing and until all moisture is eliminated in the room.
  - Avoid extended showers.
  - Avoid pulling blinds or curtains during the evening in order to permit air circulation on the surface of the window. This will prevent condensation/frost build up.

## Eavestrough :

- Some homeowners may choose to have eavestrough installed. In this case, it is important that they be forewarned that eavestrough may be a source of water infiltration due to ice buildup. In such instances, this may cause damages to the roofing and even void its warranty.
- If the homeowner decides to have eavestrough installed, here are a few pointers to keep in mind: 1) For multiple roof levels, drain upper roof water directly into the

eavestrough or to the ground. Do not drain water onto a lower roof since this may cause a premature deterioration of the roof. 2) The downspouts must drain the water as far away as possible from the foundation and far from the joint of the garage and the asphalt driveway.

- Clean leaves and debris from the eavestrough on a regular basis in order to prevent blockage and/or, ice or water buildup.

## Electrical:

- GFI outlets (bathrooms): All outlets are interconnected among bathrooms. Thus if one outlet in one of the bathrooms jumps then this affects all bathroom electrical outlets. Therefore, find the bathroom that has the “Reset” outlet and activate accordingly.
- GFI outlets (exterior) : All exterior outlets are interconnected. Thus if one outlet jumps then this affects all exterior electrical outlets. Therefore, find the exterior outlet that has the “Reset” outlet and activate accordingly. If this does not activate the outlets then you must proceed to the electrical panel in the basement in order to reset the circuit breaker. First, put the circuit breaker to « OFF », wait 1 minute, put breaker back « ON » and wait 1 minute before plugging electrical appliance back in the exterior electrical outlet.
- Electrical panel – circuit breakers: When one or more electrical outlets do not work, then you must proceed to the electrical panel in the basement in order to reset the circuit breaker. First, put the circuit breaker to «OFF», and then back to « ON » all the while making sure that the breaker is completely brought to its furthest position. Note that some defective electrical appliances are often the cause of circuit breaks. Repair or replace the appliance in such cases.
- Smoke detectors: Clean regularly; dust can activate the alarm. Also, sometimes during the night, small insects may be the cause of the activation of the smoke detector alarm.

## Faucets – Exterior: (SEE « Maintenance to do in fall »)

## Fireplace (Natural gas):

- Do not clean fireplace window with household cleaners. Use instead a product such as *Imperial Kel Kem* which is a product specifically made for this use. This type of product is available at your nearest hardware store.
- Remember that the first ignition of the season may require numerous tries before the pilot light turns on. Time is needed to let the natural gas reach the ignition.

## Fireplace (Wood):

- Have the chimney professionally swept before its first use.



## Floors (Ceramic):

- Follow manufacturer's maintenance care.
- Do not wash with an abrasive cleaner as this may dull and wear the surface. Use a product recommended by the manufacturer.
- Hairline cracks in the grout is normal due to slight movement of the wood in the sub-floor.

## Floors (Hardwood):

- Follow manufacturer's maintenance care.
- It is very important to control the level of humidity in the home in order to preserve the beauty of hardwood floors.
- REFER to "HUMIDITY CONTROL" section FOR IMPORTANT GUIDELINES.
- Stiletto high heel shoes, heavy furniture, the sliding of furniture, or other sharp objects such as small rocks can leave indentations in the hardwood floor. Use floor protectors on the feet of furniture.
- Put protective pads under furniture legs to avoid scratches.
- Wipe up spills before they are absorbed in the wood.
- Use a manufacturer approved vinyl rug underlay if putting a rug over the hardwood floor. Rubber, foam back or plastic mats may discolor the hardwood floor.

## Floors (Vinyl no wax resilient):

- Follow manufacturer's maintenance care.
- Put protective pads under furniture legs to prevent scratches, dents or cuts.
- Do not use mats or rugs with a rubber or latex backing since these backings may permanently discolor the floor
- Wipe up spills before they are absorbed in between floor seams, baseboards or trims.
- Use only cleaning products that are recommended by the manufacturer. Harsh and other types of cleaners may cause dullness and discoloration; these may also make the vinyl become hard and brittle.

## Floors (Carpet):

- Follow manufacturer's maintenance care.
- **ATTENTION \*\*especially for berber type carpets:**
  - **Use the appropriate vacuum cleaner attachment that won't snag the fibers**, as recommended by the manufacturer. Usually this means, **DO NOT use a vacuum rotating beater bar/brush, especially on carpet joints or near carpet cuts** usually located near wall baseboards or floor transitions because if you snag a strand and break it the whole row may come unraveled.
  - **Never walk with high heels, keep pets off it with their claws.**

- **Do not drag your furniture or other objects.**
- Berber type carpets are made in one continuous loop a bit like a wool sweater, if you pull on one strand then one or a few rows can or will unravel.



- If a strand does come loose and/or unravels, follow a manufacturer's suggested repair method. Usually, temporarily glue down strand before any further damage is done until a proper repair can be done.

## Frame (Wood):

- Lemay Homes uses kiln-dried lumber for its framing. However, the percentage of moisture in wood fluctuates during the home's first heating season thus the shrinking of materials may be the cause of certain occurrences that do not adversely affect the structural integrity of the home. Here are some of the possible occurrences for the drying of materials:
  - thin cracks appear exposed wood « joists &/or beams »
  - small gaps between cabinets and walls
  - minor joints may open in door and window trims, baseboards and walls
  - small gaps may appear between fireplace mantel and walls
  - squeaks of floor underlay, wood flooring and/or stairs may occur
- These types of occurrences are easily fixed by concealing with latex caulking, putty or filler. Your nearest hardware store will be able to suggest the best material to use in order to conceal these occurrences.

## Furnace:

- Clean or change the filter monthly (or according to manufacturer recommendations). This will make the furnace more energy efficient and use less energy.
- Have your furnace maintained by a professional on a yearly basis in order to assure no unpleasant surprises during the heating season.

## Garage :

- Lubricate the door system to promote a smooth and quiet operation. This action will improve the lifespan of the door system.

## Humidity control:

Moisture is present in all homes, but when it becomes excessive, homeowners need to take action to protect their new home investment.

**Also refer to “ *CONDENSATION* ” section for other related information.**

Humidity is the amount of moisture/water vapor present in the air. It comes from many sources: cooking, baths/showers, laundry, dishwashing, human or pet presence (breathing/body perspiration), indoor plants, new building materials which contain a lot of humidity such as lumber, plaster, grout and masonry and which drying occurs in most part during the first twelve months after construction.

**Homeowners may also see more condensation in new homes** because, **in the interest of energy efficiency**, new building materials and techniques in weather-stripping, insulation, vapor barriers, etc., are used. Consequently, **exterior air is kept out, also locking interior moisture inside the home**. As a result, **moisture/condensation** created in bathrooms, kitchens, laundries and occupants **no longer flow to the outside, unless mechanically ventilated**.

In light of these facts, high vigilance of the humidity level is a very important aspect of home maintenance for the benefit of its inhabitants; all wood surfaces such as hardwood floors, cabinets, furniture and sub-floor; as well as for the protection of your new home investment.

Homeowners should not ignore condensation/humidity. Your damp basement and foggy windows are giving you signals to reduce the indoor humidity before they cause problems that require highly expensive repairs. High humidity can damage building materials and cause mould growth.

SIGNS OF EXCESS HUMIDITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Water behind basement wall insulation</b></li><li>• <b>Damp concrete floors and walls</b></li><li>• <b>Wet stains on floors and walls (e.g. baseboards)</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Condensation on cold water pipes</b></li><li>• <b>Condensation on windows</b></li><li>• <b>Musty smells</b></li><li>• <b>High humidity levels on hygrometer</b></li></ul>

As a general rule, here are a few guidelines to follow:

- The relative humidity level in the home should generally vary between 30% and 50%. However, a middle ground must be found according:
  - To the frequency and type of cooking made in the home
  - The quantity of plants in the home

- The number of occupants in the home and consequently the frequency of showers/baths taken and their use of a fan during and after the shower/bath.
- The quantity of domestic animals in the home
- If new renovations have been made (a lot of humidity is present in new construction materials)
- NOTE: always ensure that the dryer exhaust is well connected to the wall and that the air vent is free of laundry lint
- **Purchase a hygrometer for each floor levels in your home (especially for the basement) and use them to help monitor the humidity levels.** Adjust the ventilation/heating/cooling of the home when the relative humidity level is outside the bounds of what is normal and acceptable.
- **You MUST install and activate a dehumidifier in the basement within the first year of occupancy.**
  - During spring, summer and early fall months, when the basement humidity levels are at their highest (**EVEN AFTER THE FIRST YEAR**), you **MUST** use a dehumidifier in the basement (with all of the basement doors opened and with the furnace fan set at “ON”) 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Lemay Homes recommends using a properly sized dehumidifier with a hose attachment that runs to the floor drain. This hose will prevent the tank from filling up and shutting off continuously or needing to empty the tank continuously to keep the humidifier running.
  - **NOTE: Sometimes a dehumidifier should even be used in the basement during winter months when naturally occurring condensation/frost on materials that are in direct contact to the high contrast exterior temperature (e.g. cement foundations). By using a dehumidifier during this time, the excess humidity will be picked up as soon as the frost starts to melt. We recommend you have a good hygrometer installed in the basement to give you an accurate day to day reading of humidity level to better help you control the humidity efficiently.**
- **The installation of an air conditioner is strongly recommended** (especially with hardwood floors in the home).
- Use the hood fan when cooking.
- Use the bathroom fan during the whole length of time spent taking a bath and/or shower. Also leave the fan on for a period of time afterwards. The use of a timer for this purpose is very practical. (If there is a window in the bathroom, open it to help the air circulate and to evacuate the humidity out of the home.)
- **HRV/Air exchangers crave constant attention every day with the fluctuation of the weather outside.**
  - HRV should be turned off when exterior temperatures are above 20C or below -20C.
  - As a general rule, the HRV should be turned off during the summer (to avoid taking humid exterior air into the home). In such a case, the activation of an air dehumidifier and/or an air conditioner will take care of controlling the humidity level in the home.
  - *Refer to the manufacturer instruction manual for more information.*
- Keep basement windows closed during the summer months.
- Heat your home adequately during the winter months.
- If you have a humidifier, shut it off if the humidity level is too high.

- Tarion – Avoiding Moisture Damage:  
<http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Avoiding-Moisture-Damage.aspx>

## Land settlement:

- Land settlement is a natural occurrence.
- Ascertain that a proper slope is maintained around the perimeter of the home to drain water away from the foundation.

## Maintenance to do in the Spring:

- TARION – Spring Home Maintenance Checklist:  
<http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Spring-Maintenance-Checklist.aspx>

## Maintenance to do in the Summer:

- TARION – Summer Home Maintenance Checklist:  
<http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Summer-Maintenance-Checklist.aspx>

## Maintenance to do in the Fall:

- From the basement, close all exterior water valves in order to avoid inundation. Once this step is completed, open all exterior valves in order to evacuate leftover/standing water in the valve. This will prevent plumbing pipes from bursting.
- Ceiling fans: Close the fans, clean and oil the motor, clean and dry the fans palms and reverse the direction of air in order to push hot air near the ceiling towards the floor.
- Replace smoke detector batteries if applicable and test the smoke detector. Batteries usually need to be replaced twice a year and the detector must be tested weekly.
- Inspect door and window weather strips to diminish cold air entry and increase efficiency.
- Inspect caulking around door and window frames and apply when necessary to avoid air and/or water infiltration.
- Clean and repair eavestrough: Remove leaves and debris to prevent water/ice overflow or infiltration during heavy rain/snow storms, and/or during periods of thaw and frost of snow/ice.
- Inspect foundation walls to prevent water infiltration during the Spring thaw. Since water is a major component of cement, it is normal that during the drying of the material that cracks appear but they do not necessarily indicate that there is a problem, since some are more than normal. Therefore a regular inspection is recommended in order to document the presence of new cracks when they develop
- Fill all cracks in asphalt driveway to prevent deterioration during the Spring thaw of ice/snow.
- Verify roof shingles before the first snowfall and repair accordingly in order to prevent water infiltrations.
- For wood fireplaces, have a professional sweep your chimney.

- Clean air exchanger filter, as well as air intake outside.
- TARION – Fall Home Maintenance Checklist:  
<http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Fall-Home-Maintenance-Checklist.aspx>

## Maintenance to do in the Winter:

- TARION – Winter Home Maintenance Checklist:  
<http://www.tarion.com/homeowners/yourwarrantycoverage/Pages/Winter-Home-Maintenance-Checklist.aspx>

## Roof:

- Verify roof shingles after strong rain or snow storms so that damaged shingles may be repaired immediately to avoid water infiltration.
- Verify that all roof ventilation are not blocked by debris and/or snow to assure proper air circulation in the attic. If some vents are blocked, obtain professional help to remedy this situation. In the event that such an event occurs and that the removal of debris or snow is not done promptly, this may result in an accumulation of condensation in the attic space thus causing even more serious problems.
- After strong wind or snow storms, verify that the insulation has not been pushed away due to wind or snow infiltration through the soffit aeration holes. In such circumstances, remove the snow and replace the insulation as is supposed to be. Be careful while in the attic because any pressure put against the drywall of the ceiling below may crack, collapse or cause personal injuries.
- Attics are not created to be a storage area. This excess weight may cause undue stress on the joists thus be the cause of cracks in the ceiling below, prevent proper air circulation, and have other consequences.

## Sod:

- Obtain a proper watering permit from your Municipality if this is required.
- From the first hours and during the first few days after the installation of the new sod, watering is extremely important in order to promote proper rooting. This means to assure that water has seeped in under the sod in order to encourage the roots to dig deeper in the earth below. Remember that **YOU CAN NOT OVER WATER** your sod after the initial installation because the roots will not have had the chance to set into the earth below.
  - Week 1 - Day 1, 2, 3 and 4 water.
  - Week 2 – Day 1, 3 and 5 water. (Water three times during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week.)
  - Week 3 and more – Reduce irrigation to 25 mm (1 inch) of water a week during the summer, including rain water, to encourage deep, healthy rooting. Use a tuna can as a gauge.
- Once rooting has properly set, you may need mowing after 6 or 7 days. Make sure that your lawnmower blades are properly sharpened.

- Never remove more than 3 cm of leaf height at a time when mowing.
- A deep watering is more valuable than a few small waterings to promote proper root growth.
- Once the roots are deeply rooted, do not over water because then, at that point, this will prevent proper air circulation to the root system.

### Water heater:

- Partially drain the water heater, once a year, in order to extend its lifespan and maximize its efficiency. Refer to the manufacturer's guidelines or rental company (if applicable).