

Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region



Homeowner Care Manual

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Caring for Your New Home

Your home has been constructed with quality materials and the labor of experienced craftsmen. Prior to our using any material, it must meet our specifications for quality and durability. All work is performed under our supervision to attain the best possible results.

Although quality materials and workmanship have been used in your home, this does not mean that it will be free from care and maintenance. A home, like an automobile, requires care and attention from day one. General homeowner maintenance is essential to providing a lasting quality home.

Habitat for Humanity of Charlotte is proud of the product we built and our aim was to create lasting value. This cannot be achieved unless you, as the Homeowner, properly maintain your home and all of its components. Periodic maintenance is necessary because of a number of factors, such as normal wear and tear, climatic condition, the inherent characteristics of various materials used in your home (such as wood) and normal service required by the mechanical systems. Natural fluctuations in temperature and humidity also impact your home.

Many times, a minor adjustment or repair done immediately by you saves you a more serious, time-consuming, and costly repair later. **Note also, that negligence of routine maintenance can void applicable limited warranty coverage on all or part of your home.**

We recognize that it is impossible to describe every aspect of care and maintenance that may be needed for good home care; however, we have covered many important details. The subjects covered include major components of our homes, listed in alphabetical order. Each topic includes suggestions for your use and care. Not all components listed are included in every Habitat home.

Emergency Service

If you experience the following emergencies:

1. **Gas leak.** (Leave your house immediately and contact your utility company. (Piedmont Natural Gas customers, call 1-800-752-7504).
2. **Total loss of heat when the outside temperature is below 45 degrees.** Call the heating company that installed your heat pump (phone number listed on the sub-contractor information sticker inside of kitchen cabinet) or another heating company.
3. **Total loss of electricity.** This means all power to the entire house. For power failure to one room or outlet, check to see if GFCI's or breakers are tripped. Otherwise, check with your utility company (Duke Energy customers, call 800-777-9898), or call an electrician. The electrician that

worked on your house will be listed on the sub-contractor information sticker inside of your kitchen cabinets.

4. Plumbing leak that requires the entire water supply be shut off. Turn off the water at the water main shut-off valve and call a plumber. The plumber that worked on your house will be listed on the sub-contractor information sticker inside of your kitchen cabinets.

5. Total loss of water. (Check with Charlotte Water -call 311- to be certain the problem is not a general outage in the area).

Appliances (range, fridge, washer, dryer, water heater)

The manufacturers of kitchen and laundry appliances will work directly with you if any repairs are needed for those products. Be prepared to provide the model and serial number of the item and the closing date on your home. Appliance warranties are generally for one year; refer to the literature provided by the manufacturer for complete information. **Warranties for appliances are not available through Habitat.** All appliance warranties are assigned to you at the closing. The appliances are warrantied directly to you in accordance with the terms and conditions of the written warranties supplied by the manufacturers.

Mail warranty registration cards directly to the manufacturer. Failure to do this may result in negation of your warranty.

If a problem arises with an appliance, call the customer service number listed in the manufacturer's warranty. When reporting warranty items to the appliance manufacturer, be prepared to supply the following:

1. The date of purchase (closing);
2. The serial and model numbers (found on a metal plate on side or bottom of each appliance);
3. A description of the problem.

Use and Care

Read and follow all manufacturer requirements for each appliance in your home. Some recommendations from Habitat include:

Clothes Washer and Dryer

Your top-loading washing machine requires special detergents due to its high efficiency design. Carefully follow the manufacturer's directions for using it. The shut-off valves are located behind the washing machine. Be sure to clean the dryer filter after each and every use- your clothes will

dry much faster, and the dryer will use less electricity and last longer. Not doing so could result in a fire. It is also a good idea to vacuum out any clothing lint from the dryer hose once per year. **Note: the condensation drain line from your HVAC unit runs from your mechanical equipment (located in the attic space) to the same drain that your washing machine uses. Under standard operation of your air conditioning unit, water will drain down this line. This may sound like water leaking behind your washing machine, but it is completely normal.**

Dishwasher (if applicable)

In order to operate your dishwasher, the corresponding power switch on the wall must be turned “on”. Make sure to **only** use dishwasher rated dish detergents- not regular dish soap or hand soap, as this will cause a foamy mess to explode out of the dishwasher. For best results, rinse dishes before loading them into the dishwasher. If any issues arise with your dishwasher, call Whirlpool directly at 1-800-253-1301.

Electric Stove

Turn off burners and oven when not in use. Do not use the oven in place of the furnace to heat your home. A clean stove and oven will work more efficiently and give you many years of carefree performance. Turn off the breaker before replacing switches or heating elements. If any issues arise with your electric range, call Whirlpool directly at 1-800-253-1301.

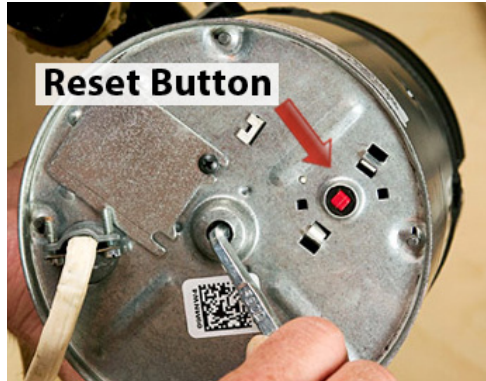
Fire Extinguisher

It is important to understand the operation of your fire extinguisher in the event of an emergency. Be sure to know your fire extinguisher’s location (normally located under the kitchen sink). Fire extinguishers do expire after a number of years due to loss of pressure- make certain that yours are up to date on their maintenance and in good working order should you ever to use it.

Garbage Disposal (if applicable)

Use the disposal to grind soft kitchen scraps ONLY. Never pour grease down the sink as it will solidify and cause a blockage. The unit is attached to the underside of the sink at one of the drain openings and is plugged into an electrical outlet under the sink. Always run water down the sink while the disposal is in use. Occasionally, your disposal may become stuck and emit a humming noise when turned on. First, ensure the disposal is switched off at the breaker panel before servicing. Check for obstructions in the sink. This issue can usually be fixed by using the appropriate sized hex key and inserted it into a hole in the bottom of the disposal to manually

turn the disposal blades around until no resistance is felt. This should work to free up rusted or seized blades. If this does not resolve your issue, you can also try resetting the small red button on the underside of the disposal (overload protection switch). If the overload protection has tripped, the button will extend about ¼". See image below.



Gas Stove (if applicable)

Turn on the exhaust hood before turning on the stove or oven to vent any gas fumes. Turn off burners and oven when not in use. Do not use the oven in place of the furnace to heat your home. A clean stove and oven will work more efficiently and give you many years of carefree performance. Turn off the breaker before replacing switches or heating elements.

Range Hood

Most of the time, the exhaust hood will only require you to clean the surfaces and replace or clean the filter.

Kitchen Exhaust Fan

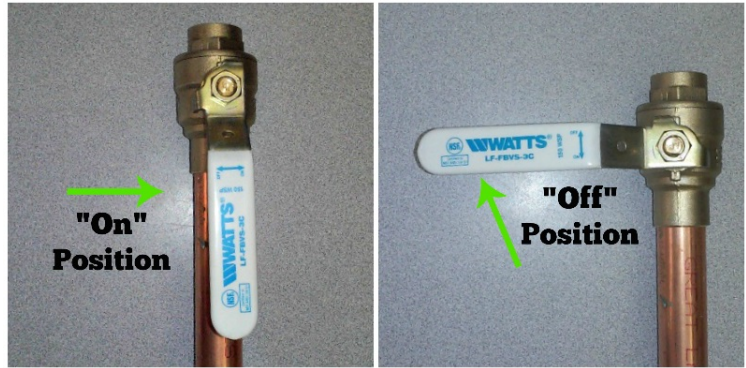
This exhaust fan is located directly above the kitchen range and provides more exhausting power than the range hood alone. This fan vents directly to the outdoors and when turned on, helps to remove steam and cooking odors. Also see "Bath Exhaust fans"

Refrigerator

To help maintain efficient operation, vacuum/dust the evaporator coil located behind or underneath the fridge at least once a year. If any issues arise with your refrigerator, call Whirlpool directly at 1-800-253-1301.

Water Heater

This appliance is responsible for generating warm water in your home. Our plumbers set the default temperature to be 120° when you move in your home. Increasing this temperature can be dangerous and result in severe burns. There is an electrical disconnect breaker located in the water heater closet. This switch is



used to disconnect power while being serviced by professionals. There is hot water shut-off valve located on the water heater. Turning this valve to the off position (90° to the pipe) stops the flow of all **hot** water. Be sure to know the difference between the hot water shut-off and the main water shut-off valve in case of a plumbing emergency.

Attic Access

The attic space is not intended for storage. Access is provided for purposes of maintaining mechanical equipment that is located in the attic. When performing any needed task in the attic, caution should be used to not step off wood members onto the drywall. This can result in personal injury and/or damage to the ceiling below.

Cabinets

Products such as lemon oil, Liquid Gold, and Old English Furniture Polish and Scratch Cover are suggested for caring for wood finish cabinets. Follow container directions; do not use more than once a month to protect against excessive buildup. Avoid paraffin-based spray or washing cabinets with water, as both will damage the luster of the finish. If hinges catch, or drawer glides become sluggish, a small amount of lubricant, such as WD-40, will improve their action. Door height can be adjusted by loosening the screws that attach the hinge to the door, and then tightening the screws once desired position is achieved. Cabinet exteriors are assembled on site. If the cabinet skins appear to be coming loose, a small bead of adhesive/ silicone will reattach the panel side.

Caulking

Time and weather will shrink caulking and dry it out so that it no longer provides a good seal against moisture and air infiltration. As a matter of routine maintenance, it is wise to check the caulking and make repairs as needed. Caulking compounds and dispenser guns are available at most hardware stores. Read the label to make sure the product that you are buying suits the purpose that you hope to use it for.

Silicone Caulk

Caulking that contains silicone will not accept paint but works well where water is present (for example, where the tub meets wall or sink meets countertop). This kind of caulk cannot be easily cleaned up with water.

Latex Caulk

Latex caulking is appropriate for an area that requires painting (along the window sill or where trim meets the wall). This kind of caulk can be easily be cleaned up with water.

Concrete

Foundation

The foundation of your home has been designed and installed in accordance with Mecklenburg County's building code. The walls of the foundation are poured concrete with steel reinforcing rods. Once the structural aspect of the foundation has been built, a parge coat is applied to the surface to enhance the aesthetics of the home's foundation. Even though the foundation has been approved by a code enforcement inspector and constructed in accordance with engineering requirements, cracks can still develop in the wall (more commonly the thinly coated exterior parge coat). Cracks in concrete are normal and also unavoidable; they do not necessarily indicate foundation damage. Should you find a crack, it can be sealed with a concrete sealer, such as "DAP Concrete Sealant".

Driveways & Sidewalks

In most cases concrete is a durable, long lasting product without much needed maintenance. To properly care for your exterior flatwork concrete (i.e. sidewalks, driveways) do not use salt or chemical ice melts. Cracks in concrete are normal and also unavoidable; they do not necessarily indicate driveway damage. If cracks do occur, be sure to fill them in with a concrete caulking, or equivalent concrete patch, to prevent further cracking.

Cracks

Some cracking in concrete occurs in almost all homes. The warranty does not cover aesthetic concrete cracks. Concrete will not be replaced due to cracking. By maintaining good drainage away from your home, you are protecting your home's foundation. Maintenance of drainage away from all concrete slabs will minimize cracking and other forms of movement. Cracks in slabs should be sealed with a waterproof concrete caulk to prevent moisture from penetrating to the soil beneath.

Cracking in the concrete flatwork is often caused by extreme cold. During the summer, moisture finds its way under the concrete along the edges, or through cracks in the surface. In winter, this moisture forms frost that can lift the concrete, increasing or causing more cracking.

Expansion Joints

Expansion joints look like strips of felt and go between two surfaces of concrete. The purpose is to help control the expansion of the concrete material itself. Concrete is also susceptible to shrinking. If the concrete shrinks, moisture can penetrate under the concrete and lift the expansion joint. If this occurs, you can fill the gap with a concrete caulk.

Ice, Snow and Chemicals

Remove ice and snow from concrete slabs as promptly as possible after snowstorms. Protect concrete from abuse by chemical agents such as pet urine, fertilizers, automotive fluids, repeated washing, or de-icing agents, such as road salt that can drip from vehicles. All of these items can harm the surface of the concrete. If you want to put something down to help with slippery, icy conditions, use sand.

Cleaning

Do not wash patios, porches, driveways, etc. with cold water from an outside faucet when temperatures are extremely high and the hot sun has been shining on the concrete. The abrupt change in temperature can damage the surface bond of the concrete. Sweeping is the recommended method of keeping exterior concrete clean. If washing is necessary, do this when temperatures are moderate.

Heavy Vehicles

Do not permit heavy vehicles such as moving vans or concrete trucks to drive on your concrete work. This concrete is not intended to bear the weight of this type of vehicle.

Countertops

Always use a cutting board when cutting, chopping, etc. Protect the counter from heat and extremely hot pans; if the pot is too hot to touch, avoid placing it on the counter.

Laminate Countertops

You should not use abrasive cleanser or razor blades on countertops since both will cause certain damage to the surface. Your countertops are made from laminated press board and not real, solid wood. This means certain measures must be taken to keep them in top condition. Be sure to clean pools of water as soon as they are discovered, avoid placing wet dishes on the countertop to dry out, occasionally inspect the caulking around the countertop to ensure it is intact, and use a mild spray cleaner to wipe clean after use. If your kitchen is equipped with a dishwasher, it is wise to apply a penetrating sealer, such as Minwax Polycrylic, to the underside

of the countertop (just above the dishwasher) in order to prevent moisture issues caused by the dishwasher.

Cleaners

Avoid abrasive cleaners that will damage the luster of the surface.

Dish Drying Mats

Rubber drain mats can trap moisture beneath them causing the laminated plastic to warp and blister. Dry the surface as needed.

Caulking

The caulking around the edge of your countertops and between the countertops and the sink may shrink, leaving a slight gap. Refer to “Caulking” for maintenance hints for this condition.

Crawl Space (if applicable)

The crawl space is not intended for storage. There is a thin layer of plastic on the floor of the crawl space. This plastic works as a vapor barrier to prevent moisture from rising through the ground into your home. It is important to occasionally inspect this plastic layer for damage, as removing/ tearing it could cause mold and mildew issues.

Slight dampness may be experienced in the crawl space. Pools of standing water should be reported to Habitat for inspection. (See also, “Vents”)

Doors/Locks

The doors installed in your home are subject to the natural characteristics of wood such as shrinkage and warpage. Due to humidity changes and the use of your heating system, showers, and dishwasher, etc., interior doors may require minor adjustments. Putty, filler, or latex caulk can be used to fill any minor separations that may develop at mitered joints in door trim.

Sticking

The most common cause of a sticking door is the natural expansion of lumber due to changes in humidity. When sticking is due to swelling during a damp season, do not make any changes or adjustments to the door unless it continues to stick after the weather changes. Use sandpaper to smooth the door. Be certain to repaint the area of the door where it was sanded to seal against moisture.

Before cutting a door due to sticking, there are two steps to try. First, apply either a paste wax, light coat of paraffin, or candle wax to the sticking surface. Second, tighten the screws that hold the doorjamb or doorframe.

Hinges

Removing the hinge pin and rubbing a lead pencil or graphite lubricant on it can remedy a squeaky door hinge. Do not use oil as it can gum up.

Failure to Latch

If a door will not latch due to minor settling, you can correct this by making a new opening in the jamb for the latch plate and raising or lowering the plate accordingly. A chisel or a sharp utility blade works well for this application.

Bi-fold Doors

Interior bi-fold doors will sometimes stick or warp due to weather conditions. Applying a silicone lubricant to the tracks can minimize this inconvenience.

Slamming

Slamming doors can damage both doors and jambs, and can even cause cracking in walls. Hanging on the doorknob can work the hardware loose and cause the door to sag. Do not allow children to do this.

Interior Locks

Bedroom and bathroom doors with privacy locks (lock from inside the room) have the ability to be unlocked from outside the room in the event someone has locked themselves inside. A special 'emergency door key' is placed on the top edge of the door casing or inside of the kitchen drawers during construction. To open a locked door, simply insert the emergency key into the pin hole on the door knob and push straight in.

Exterior Locks

Lubricate exterior door locks with graphite or other waterproof lubricant. Avoid oil, as it will gum up.

Exterior Finish

To ensure longer life for your exterior doors, it is recommended that you repaint them periodically with a white or light colored **exterior rated** paint.

Weather Strip

Weather stripping and/or any threshold supplied with exterior doors will occasionally require adjustment or replacement.

Drywall

Slight cracking, nail “pops” and/or seams may become visible in walls and ceilings. These occurrences are caused by the shrinkage of the wood and normal deflection of rafters to which the drywall is attached. Cracks or nail pops in drywall do not signify structural damage.

Repairs

Most drywall repairs can easily be made by the homeowner. To correct a nail or screw pop (nails in walls, screws in ceilings), reset the nail with a hammer or screw with a screwdriver. Cover it with spackle (available at paint and hardware stores). Apply two or three thin coats, allowing them to dry in between applications. When completely dry, sand the surface with fine grain sandpaper before painting. Indentations caused by sharp objects can be filled with spackle in the same manner. Hairline cracks can be repaired with a coat of paint; slightly larger cracks can be repaired with spackle or caulk.



For larger holes or indentions (golf ball sized or larger), use a metal drywall patch kit to reinforce the hole (sold at most hardware stores). Spread a thin layer of drywall spackle over the surrounding area, place the reinforcing patch on the area to be repaired, and then apply a few thin coats of spackle over top of the patch, allowing each to dry completely before adding more spackling. When dry, sand the surface with fine grain sandpaper before painting.

Electrical

The main exterior electrical panel for your home includes a main shutoff that controls all the electrical power to the home. In addition, individual breakers control the separate circuits as labeled in the breaker panel. Be certain you are familiar with the location of the master control panel. This should be the first place you go to troubleshoot when an electrical issue occurs.



Electrical panel

Each breaker is marked in the electrical panel to help you identify which breaker is connected to major appliances, lights, outlets, or other service. Should a failure occur in any part of your home, always check the breakers in the main panel box before calling for warranty service. An occasional breaker failure is not uncommon and means you have exceeded the rated amperage for the dedicated circuit you are using. The circuit “trips” in order to prevent electrical overload and a fire. If a breaker continues to trip on a regular basis, you should contact the electrician listed on the sub-contractor information sticker, located in your kitchen cabinets.

Breakers

Circuit breakers have three positions: on, off and tripped. **When a circuit breaker trips it must first be turned off before it can be turned on.** Switching the breaker directly from tripped to on will not restore service. You must first turn the switch off and then turn it on to operate the circuit breaker properly.

Outlets

If an outlet is not working, check first to see if it is one that is controlled by a GFCI receptacle (see below). Next, check the breaker.

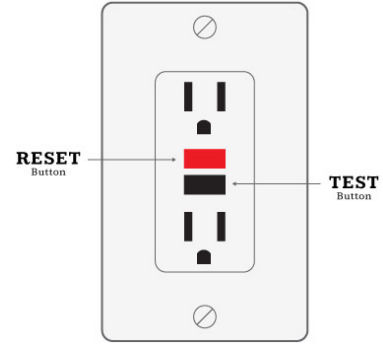
Breaker Tripping

Breakers will often trip due to overloading the circuit by plugging too many appliances into it, a worn cord or defective item, or operating an appliance with too high of a power requirement. The starting of an electric motor can also trip a breaker.

If any circuit trips repeatedly, unplug all items connected to it and reset the breaker. If it trips when nothing is connected to it, you need an electrician and the problem should be reported. If the circuit remains on, one of the items you unplugged is defective and requires repair or replacement.

GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter)

GFCI receptacles have a built-in element that senses fluctuations in power. Quite simply, the GFCI is an indoor circuit breaker. Installation of these receptacles is required by building codes in the bathroom, kitchen, and outside (areas where an individual can come into contact with water while holding as electric appliance or tool). Heavy appliances such as freezers or power tools will trip the GFCI breaker. **Do not plug a refrigerator or food freezer into a GFCI controlled outlet; the likelihood of the contents being ruined is very high, and such damage is NOT covered by the limited warranty.**



Each GFCI receptacle has a test and reset button. Once each month the test button should be pressed. This will trip the circuit. To return service, press the reset button. If a GFCI breaker trips during normal use it may be an indication of a faulty appliance and some investigation is in order. An important point to remember is that one GFCI breaker can control up to three or four outlets. (If a receptacle isn't working, check to see if one of the nearby GFCIs is tripped.)

Unused Outlets

If there are small children in the home, install safety plugs to cover unused outlets. This also minimizes air infiltration that can sometimes occur with these outlets. Teach children never to touch electrical outlets, sockets, or fixtures.

Buzzing

Fluorescent fixtures use transformer action to operate them. This action sometimes causes a buzzing sound and is a normal condition.

Bath Exhaust Fans

The bathroom exhaust fan is used to remove moisture and unpleasant odors from a room. They are located on the bathroom ceilings and are controlled by a time-controlled wall switch. During and after showering or bathing, be sure to run the fan for a full 30 minutes to remove excess moisture from the bathroom. Newer fans are often barely audible so check closely before calling for service. **Always use your bathroom exhaust fans when showering so that the moisture can be exhausted to the exterior of your house. If you do not use the fans, condensation can collect in the duct work and drip back down. This is not a roof leak.**

Underground Cables

Check the location of buried service leads as required by law, by calling the local utility locating service before digging or moving large amounts of sod. Care should be taken to keep soil around the foundation from settling to protect this service; avoid large amounts of water at this point as well.

Call before you dig- 811 or 1-800-632-4949

Modifications

Do not tamper with or add to your electrical system. For any modification that is needed, contact a licensed electrician.

Expansion and Contraction

All building materials are subject to expansion and contraction caused by changes in temperature and humidity. Dissimilar materials expand or contract at different rates. This results in separation between materials, particularly dissimilar ones. The effects can be seen in small cracks in drywall and in paint, especially where moldings meet drywall, at mitered corners, etc.

This can be alarming to an uninformed homeowner but, in fact, it is normal. Shrinkage of the wood members of your home is inevitable. This will occur in your home. It will be most noticeable during the first year, but may continue beyond that time. In most cases, paint and caulking are all that is needed to conceal this minor evidence of a natural phenomenon. Properly installed caulking will shrink and must be maintained by the Homeowner.

Flooring

Carpet

Vacuuming high traffic areas daily will not only keep them clean but will help to maintain the upright position of the nap. Spills should be wiped up and stains spot cleaned immediately. Always dab at the stain, never rub it. Stain removers should be tested first on an out of the way area of the carpet, such as in a closet, to check for any undesirable effects. Professional or steam cleaning should be performed regularly, usually annually.

Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT) and Luxury Vinyl Plank (LVP)

The type and frequency of foot traffic on your vinyl floors will determine the frequency of maintenance needed. In general, you should remove dirt and grit by sweeping or dust mopping

daily, wipe up spills as quickly as possible, use protective pads for furniture and appliances to prevent scratching, and avoid exposure to direct sunlight for prolonged periods of time. The flooring manufacturer does not recommend that you use vinegar as a cleaner for your vinyl floors. While vinegar makes a great cleaner for household dirt, over time it can damage your floors because it is not pH balanced. Also, please do not use steam to clean your floors. The extreme temperatures can cause expansion of the vinyl which could lead to wrinkles and glue bond issues.

Grading and Drainage

The final soil level around your home has been inspected and approved for proper drainage of your lot. For any lots located near a watershed area or flood prone area, our surveyors complete an elevation certificate, which certifies that the lowest portion of your home will be safe in event of a flood. Our construction staff inspects your lot both prior to acquisition and throughout construction to ensure it has adequate drainage. Typically, the grade around your home should slope one inch in the first ten feet away from your home, tapering to a 2% slope.

Positive Drainage

It is essential that you maintain the slopes around your home to permit the water to drain away from the home as rapidly as possible. Failure to do so can result in major structural damage and will void your warranty.

During construction, it is necessary to excavate an area larger than the foundation of your home. In addition, some trenching is necessary for installation of utility lines. Although the soil is replaced and re-compacted it does not return to its original density. Some settling will occur, especially after prolonged heavy rainfall or melting of considerable amounts of snow. This can continue to occur for the first few years you are in your home, depending on the amount of precipitation that occurs and other factors.

Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) System

The HVAC system installed in your home will provide you with many years of comfort if given proper care and maintenance.

Thermostat

A programmable thermostat was chosen for your home to help maintain a comfortable temperature and reduce heating and cooling bills. It can be set to automatically adjust to your specific comfort requirements. Please refer to the operation manual that came with your thermostat for programming and features.

Only adjust your thermostat a degree or two at a time. A Heat Pump is not designed to heat or cool your house rapidly. It is designed to gently keep your house comfortable using very little energy.

Annual Maintenance

Your HVAC installer recommends that you have your equipment checked and serviced once per year by a licensed HVAC company. Good maintenance of your equipment can save energy and money, as well as prolong the life of the heat pump itself. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's literature on use and care. The guidelines here include only general information.

Troubleshooting

If your heat pump is not working, there are a few things you can check. First, ensure that your thermostat is set to a temperature higher than the current temperature of your house (if heating is desired) or a lower temperature than the current temperature in your home (if air conditioning is desired). **Next, check to make sure that your return air filter is clean and free from debris; this is essential to the function of your mechanical equipment, and one of the leading causes of equipment failure.** Lastly, check your exterior electric panel to ensure that the circuits responsible for supplying electricity to your HVAC unit have not tripped the breakers.

Return Air Filter

Your return air filter is washable and reusable. Remember to clean the return air filter monthly during the heating and cooling seasons. A clogged filter can slow airflow and cause uncomfortable feeling spots in your home. Although it only takes a few minutes to clean and replace the filter, this is one of the most overlooked details of normal HVAC system care. A dirty



filter can increase energy costs by 5-25% and can result in hundreds of dollars of repair to your equipment. **If you do replace your washable air filter with a disposable type of filter, is important to replace the air filter with the exact same kind of filter that originally came with your unit; using a more restrictive filter will cause your unit to work harder to blow the same amount of air throughout your home, possibly leading to damage.** Filter washing instructions can be seen at this link: <http://www.webproducts.com/cleaning-web-plus-air-filters>

Also see "fresh air filter" below.

Fresh Air Filter

Your fresh air filter is located behind and off to the side of your return air filter. This filter is designed to clean the outside air that is drawn in each time an electronic damper opens to allow fresh air inside the home. This is a reusable filter that can be cleaned with mild soap and water, and then replaced once it's completely dry. You should plan to periodically inspect and clean this filter as needed.

Emergency Overflow Drain

During warmer months, heat pumps work to remove warm damp air. As a result of this, they remove moisture and water from your home, which drains into the same area where your clothes washer drains (see clothes washer and dryer). There is a plastic PVC emergency overflow drain (normally located outside of your house in the soffit) that extends from your mechanical equipment in the attic to the outside. The purpose of this drain is to prevent condensation from your unit from overflowing into the attic in the event that your primary condensation drain becomes clogged or fails. If you see water coming from the emergency overflow drain, turn your unit off immediately and call the HVAC repair technician listed on the sub-call list.

Adjust Air Vents

Experiment with the adjustable registers in your home to establish the best air flow for your lifestyle. This is a very individual matter and you will need to balance the system for your family.

Trial Run

Have a trial run early in the fall to test the heat pump. If service is needed, it is much better to discover this prior to the heating season.

Temperature

Normal temperature variations from floor to floor (depending on the style of home) can be as much as 5 degrees or more on extremely hot or cold days.

Overheating

Your new home should not be heated too quickly. Overheating can cause excessive shrinkage in framing lumber and may damage the home. In the beginning two month after move in, use as little heat as possible to be comfortable and increase it gradually.

Odor

It is normal for the heating system to emit odors for a few minutes when it is first turned on after an extended period of not being used. This is caused by dust that has settled in the ducts and should pass very quickly.

Gas (in gas appliance homes)

If you smell gas in the house, have everyone leave immediately and meet at a pre-determined place outside the home. Do not use matches or any type of open flame in an attempt to re-light any appliance as it may cause an explosion. Call the gas company from outside the home. Turn off the gas meter at the shut-off valve only if you can do so safely.

Ductwork

The heating and cooling system is a sealed system and the ductwork should remain attached and securely fastened.

Insulation

Blown Attic Insulation

The effectiveness of blown insulation (in the attic) is diminished if it is uneven. The last step in any work done in your attic should be to check that the insulation lays smooth and even. Again, **remember the attic is not intended for storage.**

Under Floor System (Crawl Only)

The effectiveness of batted insulation (between the floor joists, under the crawl space) is diminished if it is compressed, missing, uneven, or has voids. It's a good idea to occasionally visually inspect your insulation to ensure none has fallen out, as this will cause uncomfortable spots and increase utility bills. Insulation should be dry- if any moisture or signs of moisture are noted, contact a plumber.

Landscaping

Grass Seed

When grass seed is sowed, it needs a lot of water every day until the grass roots get established (about 4-6 weeks). Habitat staff or volunteers will help educate you as to how much and how often to water. Stay off the lawn as much as possible during this time. After the grass starts to grow, begin a regular schedule of cutting and fertilizing. Carefully follow manufacturer's

directions for fertilizing and spraying. Do not remove more than 1/3 of the grass height with each mowing. Cutting more than this may harm your lawn. Homeowners are responsible for getting grass to take once seeds have been planted.

Shrub and Trees

The plants around your home will need regularly scheduled fertilizing, watering, and pruning. Check the tags on the plants for more information. If you are thinking about adding new plants or shrubs to your lot, make sure to take into consideration the adult size of the species of plant/tree you are planting, as root damage and tree limb damage can occur years down the road.

Drainage

The necessary grades have been established by Habitat to ensure proper drainage away from the house. Standing water shall not remain for extended periods of time in the immediate area of the house after a rain shower (generally, no more than 24 hours) except in swales that drain other areas. In these areas, a longer period can be anticipated (generally, no more than 48 hours). The homeowner should anticipate the possibility of standing water after an unusually heavy rainfall.

Mirrors

To clean your mirrors, use any reliable liquid glass cleaner or polisher available at most hardware or grocery stores. Avoid splashing water under the mirror. The moisture will cause the silvering to deteriorate.

Paint and Stain

The interior woodwork, as well as the bathrooms and kitchen walls have been painted with low VOC latex paint. These areas may be wiped down with a soft sponge and soapy water. Spackle may be used to cover any small defects prior to paint touch-up.

Touch-ups

Homeowners will receive a sample of interior and exterior paint used on their homes. This paint should be stored so as not to be affected by extreme temperatures. When doing touch-up painting, use a small brush, applying paint only to the damaged spot. The paint may not match the surrounding area exactly, even if the same paint mix is used. When it is time to repaint a room, prepare the wall surfaces first by cleaning with a mild soap and water mixture or a cleaning product that is recommended by the manufacturer.

Exterior

Regular painting and repair will preserve the beauty of and add value to your home. Check the painted/stained surfaces of your home's exterior annually. If you repaint before there is much chipping or wearing away of the original finish, you will save the cost of extensive surface preparation. It is a wise maintenance policy to plan on refinishing the exterior surface of your home approximately every three years. The aging of the exterior is governed by the climatic conditions. Over a period of time, this finish will fade and dull a bit. Ensure when repainting the exterior of your home, to **specifically use exterior rated paint**, as this will help protect from harmful UV rays. Be sure to paint porch trim, columns, railings, etc. as needed to prevent weather damage.

Maintenance

When you wish to repaint and/or stain the exterior on your home, popped nails should be reset; the blistered or peeling portions should be wire-brushed or scraped with a putty knife, sanded, and spotted with primer. Then the entire area can be painted and/or stained. Be certain to apply a top-quality exterior paint that has been formulated for local climate conditions. Do not allow water to spray on the exterior walls of your home. This will cause blistering, peeling, splintering, and other damage to the home. Trim painted white or light colors will more readily show grain and cracks and therefore requires additional maintenance.

Severe Weather

Hail and wind can cause a great deal of damage in a severe storm and the house should be inspected after such weather. Damage caused by severe weather should be reported to your **insurance company** promptly.

Plumbing

Your main water shutoff is located near your water heater in the closet or in the laundry area. It is important to know and remember the location of the shutoff for emergencies such as a water line freeze or break.

Freezing Pipes

Provided the home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze at temperatures above 0° Fahrenheit. Heat should be set at 55° if you will be away for an extended period of time. If you do leave for an extended amount of time, it is best to drain your water supply lines first. This is done by shutting off the main supply line and opening the faucets to relieve the pressure in the lines

Debris in Pipes

Even though your plumbing lines have been flushed out to remove dirt and foreign matter, there are usually small amounts of minerals that enter the line. Aerators on the faucets strain much of this from your water. However, debris caught in these aerators may cause the faucets to drip because rubber washers wear more rapidly when they come in contact with foreign matter.

Care and Cleaning

Follow manufacturer's directions for cleaning fixtures. Abrasive cleansers will remove the smooth finish leaving behind a porous surface that is difficult to maintain. A non-abrasive cleaner or liquid detergent is usually recommended.

Stainless Steel

Stainless steel sinks should be cleaned with soap and water to preserve their luster. Do not use abrasive cleaners; they will damage the finish. An occasional cleaning with a good stainless-steel cleaner will enhance the finish. Care should be taken to avoid leaving produce on a stainless-steel surface since prolonged contact with produce can stain the finish.

Sewer Cleanouts

Waste from your home travels from your house to the street where it connects with the city's waste infrastructure. In the event your plumbing system becomes clogged, there are a couple of sewer drain cleanout locations that a qualified plumber can remove debris from. Be sure to know the location of these cleanouts and keep them visible in the yard. Carefully avoid damage to the plastic PVC pipe/ cap and do not allow heavy equipment or vehicles to drive over top of these cleanouts.

Fixtures

Clean plumbing fixtures with a soft sponge and soapy water, then polish with a dry cloth. Drying with a soft cloth or towel will prevent water spots.

Toilet Tank Care

Avoid exposing the toilet to strikes from sharp or heavy objects; this can cause chipping or cracking. Avoid abnormal pressures against the sides of the tank. It is possible to crack the tank at the points where it is attached to the bowl. After some years, your toilet flapper and or fill valve may deteriorate to the point where water slowly drains from the tank into the bowl. If your toilet does begin to "run", the parts are easily acquired at almost all hardware stores. YouTube is a fantastic resource to learn how to fix this minor issue on your own, without having to call a plumber. Only minor tools and supplies are required. See "Running Toilet" below.

Dripping Faucet

A dripping faucet may be repaired by shutting off the water at the valve directly under the sink. Then, remove the faucet stem, change the washer, and reinstall the faucet stem. The showerhead is repaired the same way. It is important to replace the washer with another of the same type and size. Remembering not to turn the faucets off with excessive force can minimize the frequency of this repair.

Low Pressure

Your home is equipped with a pressure reducing valve, which sets the PSI in your home to about 60 PSI. This pressure is completely sufficient for daily household use. It will occasionally be necessary to remove and clean the aerators on faucets to allow proper flow of water, normally every three to four months is sufficient. You can do it more often if you notice a pressure reduction. If you are experiencing a major and sudden pressure drop, check for leaks.

Leaks

If a major plumbing leak occurs the first step is to turn off the supply of water to the area involved. This may mean shutting off the water to the entire house. Next, contact a plumber. The plumber that worked on your home is listed on the sub-contractor info sticker, listed on the inside of your kitchen cabinets.

Running Toilet

To stop running water, check the shutoff 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, there is usually a screw that you can turn to adjust the float. Turn the screw a little bit and flush the toilet to see it has improved. Use trial and error to figure out how to get the screw adjusted properly.

Clogs

Many plumbing clogs are caused by improper garbage disposal use. Always use plenty of cold water when running the disposal. **Do not put grease down the disposal or any other drain, including the toilet.** Allow the water to run a minimum of 15 seconds after shutting off the disposal.

Clogged toilets can usually be cleared with a plunger. If you use chemical agents, follow directions carefully to avoid injury or damage to you or the fixtures. Avoid overusing toilet paper. Do not flush baby wipes, diapers, feminine products, paper towels, etc. down your plumbing drains- this is not covered under your Habitat warranty.

Outside Faucets

Turn the faucet off until water drains out the back of the spigot. This feature keeps this faucet from freezing. **Remove any hoses as soon as the outside temperature falls below 35 degrees.** The water left in a hose can freeze; expand back into the pipe, causing a break in the line. Repair of a broken line to an exterior faucet is not covered by warranty.

Noise

Changes in temperature or the flow of the water itself will cause some noise in the pipes. This is normal and requires no repair. Temperature variations can be expected if water is being used in more than one location in the home.

Roof

The shingles on your roof do not require any treatment or sealer. Never attempt to walk on the roof of your home as you can easily damage the shingles which can in turn result in leakage. If, for any reason, you need to walk on the roof, take great care to avoid falls, coming in contact with overhead power lines, or damaging the flashing, vent stacks, flues or ventilators. The shingles on your home should not need to be replaced for roughly about 30 years. However, depending on weather events and conditions, your shingles may need to be replaced before this. The vents on top of your house are tied into the shingles using a rubber boot. These boots eventually crack and need to be replaced. If you happen to notice water, or brown spots on your ceiling, call a roofing company.

Severe Weather

After severe storms, a visual inspection of the roof for damages is called for. Notify your homeowner insurance company if damage is noted.

Leaks

When a leak is noticed try to detect the exact location; this will greatly simplify locating the area that requires repair when the roof is dry.

Siding

Vinyl

Habitat Charlotte uses D5 “Dutch Lap” style vinyl siding on most of our new homes. Vinyl is easily installed and repaired, and easy to clean. We recommend cleaning your siding with a

scrub brush and a mild detergent such as dawn soap. Avoid using power washers to clean siding, as its extreme force can end up cracking siding and creating small holes.

Hardie Board (if applicable)

Hardie board siding is made from reinforced concrete and wood fibers. Hardie siding looks great (when maintained), and adds value to your home. However, it must be painted every few years to combat the sun ray's fading effects. If left unpainted, Hardie siding can become dull in color, blotchy, and will not repel water as well as freshly painted siding. Be sure to use an appropriately rated paint when it comes time to paint your house.

Smoke Detectors

Each smoke detector is permanently wired to the house electrical system and has back up batteries to operate the unit in case of electrical power failure. Read the manual from the manufacturer for information on the care of smoke detectors.

Cleaning and Batteries

Once every 3 months smoke alarms should be cleaned (vacuumed) to prevent a false alarm or lack of response in a fire. After cleaning, push the button to test; the alarm should sound. For your safety, it is important that these devices be kept clean and in good operating condition.

Batteries should be changed every year. Be sure to use only new, unused batteries of the same type as originally installed. After installing the new battery, push the button to test; alarm should sound.

Stairs

There is no known method of installation that will prevent vibration in a staircase when used by adults. Often there will be a slight shrinkage where the stairs meet the wall. When this occurs, a thin bead of latex caulk can be applied and when dry, painted to match the wall

See also: Caulking, Framing

Vents

Attic ventilation through the roof or siding is required by building codes and therefore cannot be obstructed.

Occasionally, depending on the force and direction of the wind, rain or snow will infiltrate through these vents causing spotting on the ceiling. Habitat is not responsible for such weather damage and will not make repairs in these instances.

Waterproofing

Your exterior **crawl space** foundation walls have been coated with a sprayed-on asphalt waterproofing material. A French drain has been installed at the footing. There may be a sump pump located in the crawl space. While every effort has been made to eliminate any seepage, during times of excessive moisture some dampness may be noticed. Over time, natural compaction of soils in the backfill areas will usually eliminate this. Careful maintenance of positive drainage will also protect your crawl space from this condition.

Windows, Screens, and Porch Doors

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.

Cleaning

Once a month, or as needed, clean aluminum and vinyl surfaces with warm, clear water. Windows will tilt out at the lower sash to allow for easier cleaning and screen removal. Do not use any powdered cleaner. After each cleaning, apply a silicone lubricant.

Ventilation

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

Condensation

Condensation on interior surfaces of the window and frame is the result of high humidity within the home and low outside temperatures. The humidity level within the home is largely influenced and controlled by your family's lifestyle. To reduce condensation on the inside of windows, increase heat and remove moisture in your home.

Storing Screens

Many Homeowners prefer to remove and store screens for the winter to allow more light into the home. Use caution in removing screens. They are easily perforated and the frames bend if not handled with care.

Sticking Windows

Most sliding windows (both vertical and horizontal) are designed for a ten-pound pull. If sticking occurs or excessive pressure is required to open or close, a silicone lubricant should be applied. This is available at hardware stores. Do not use a petroleum-based material.

Window Locks

Acquaint yourself with the operation of the window hardware for maximum security and safety in the event of a fire.

Broken Glass

If any panes of glass become broken you should contact a glass company for re-glazing. Glass is very difficult to install without special tools. Habitat is not responsible for broken windows after occupancy unless they were noted on the walk-through list.

Tinting or Solar Coatings

Installation of these films will void the window glass warranty because they increase the heat buildup in the thermo-pane space. Homeowners should request a glass warranty from the company installing the film if they chose to do so.