



## MANAGING THE INTERIOR OF YOUR HOME

Heating, plumbing and electrical delivery and distribution systems are covered by a two-year warranty by the builder from defects in work and materials. All other materials and workmanship is covered by a one-year warranty by the builder.

### **Ventilation & Air Flow**

Understanding what ventilation and air flow systems are built into every Nirvana Homes is important to control the indoor air quality, which is an area of concern to every homeowner.

When there is excessive moisture in the air in the home, it will form condensation (or ice) on windows in the winter months. A build-up of condensation causes staining, rotting and mold, which can become a serious concern if corrective measures are not taken immediately. The kitchen and bathroom areas are the major contributors of moisture in the home. The basement may also produce condensation in the warmer months, specifically along walls and in corners, as they are cool due to the surrounding earth temperature. Nirvana Homes installs a ventilation system in each home to protect against moisture damage and to provide fresh air during the heating season.

It is recommended that the ventilation fan is run continuously during the first year of occupancy, whenever the windows are closed. The ventilation switch is located on the main floor near the thermostat. Exhaust fans are installed in each bathroom and in the kitchen, and it is recommended to turn on the exhaust fans to control moisture in these rooms when in use. Purchase a hygrometer, to monitor the moisture levels in the home (levels should range between 35% & 50%).

Install a dehumidifier in the basement to control the humidity levels in summer months, or a humidifier in the colder months, as required.

In the event of mold or mildew, carefully clean the area with a solvent of 1 part chlorine bleach to 4 parts water. Apply in a well-ventilated area using protective gloves. Let stand for 10 to 15 minutes and rinse well, allowing the surface areas to dry.

Always keep drapery and blinds open during the day to allow proper air circulation through each room.

Keep all floor air and return vents open at all times.

All kitchen and bathroom exhaust vents should be inspected for debris and lubricated on a regular basis to ensure proper air flow.

### **Heating & Venting Systems**

Nirvana Homes installs high-efficiency furnaces, which need to be inspected on a regular basis to maintain at maximum efficiency.

In the event that a furnace does not start, check the following:

Make sure the furnace door is closed (it will not run if open, for safety reasons).

Make sure the switch has been turned on at the furnace.

Check the exterior vents to ensure there are no obstructions.

Check the furnace filter to ensure it is not clogged.

Check the thermostat to ensure it is turned to heat, and is set above the current room temperature.

Check the electrical panel to ensure the circuit breaker has not been tripped...reset.

Become familiar with the heating system.

Refrain from making any modifications to the system, as it will void your two-year warranty.

In case of an emergency, contact the heating contractor posted on the label on the furnace.

Ensure all heating system vents and cold air returns are kept free from obstructions for maximum performance. Furnace filters should be checked on a regular basis and replaced when dirty.

## **Plumbing**

The municipality inspects the plumbing system in the house to ensure and enforce the Ontario Building Code requirements.

The main shut-off valve for the water in the house is attached to the water meter in the basement, located near the furnace or hot water heater area. This valve controls the water flow from the municipal water pipes below the street level into the house.

The main valve can be turned-off in the event of a major leak in the house.

Small water shut-off valves also located under each sink or at the back of the toilets and can be turned-off if a leak occurs in that area.

Any alterations to the plumbing in the home could void the two-year warranty if problems occur.

If the water pressure in the house seems restricted, check the shut-off valves under the sink to ensure they are fully on and remove the “aerator” from the faucet spout and clean as it will also restrict water flow.

Grease, food and other products like laundry lint will reduce the efficiency of the drainage system and cause blockages, which will void any plumbing warranty. Garbage cannot be washed down the sink drain, as it will cause blockages and fermentation causing dangerous gases to build up.

Items other than natural waste and toilet paper should not be flushed down the toilet, as it will block proper flow and use, and void any warranty.

## **Electrical Systems**

As with all systems in the house, the electrical system has been approved by a qualified municipal inspector to ensure it is compliant with the Ontario Building Code and is free from defects in material and workmanship.

Should you encounter an electrical outlet or switch fails to work, it could be a circuit breaker has tripped. Some examples which can cause a circuit to overload are:

- Too many items plugged in on the same circuit
- Defective plug connection
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) has tripped (exterior plug or bathroom)
- Worn or damaged on appliances or lamps
- In the event there is no power to an outlet, check the breaker in the electrical panel in the basement  
If the breaker is in the “on” position, flip it to the “off” position, and then flip it back to the “on” position
- Check the circuit breaker panel when an outlet or switch is not operating.
- Do not overload a circuit.
- Do not make any alterations to the electrical system in the house as it will void the warranty.

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

Nirvana Homes installs a GFCI outlets on the exterior and interior of the house. This type of outlet has a “shock” protector, which is sensitive, and controls current flow in an electrical circuit. If a GFCI detects a problem, it instantly interrupts or shuts-off the current to the outlet. For this reason a GFCI outlet is installed on the exterior of the house to prevent hazardous accidents.

The GFCI outlet, which is installed in bathrooms is different, as it is connected to the regular circuits in the house, and when triggered, will affect other circuits.

Check to ensure the GFCI receptacle has the reset “r” button pressed in.

## **Appliances**

It is recommended that you check all major appliances when they are delivered to ensure they are in working order. The homeowner is responsible to read and follow all information in the Care and Use and warranty manuals.

It is also important to complete the “warranty card” which comes with each appliance and send to the respective manufacturer, as they are not warranted by Nirvana Homes.

## **Smoke Alarms & CO2 Detectors**

These alarms are installed in your home to help ensure your safety, in compliance with the current building standards. The alarms are wired to the electrical system of the house and do not require batteries for operation. In the event of a power failure, the device will hold an electrical charge for 1-2 hours of continued operation.

Smoke and CO2 detectors should be tested periodically to ensure they are operating, by pressing the “test” button on the face of the detector.

Keep the device dust free with a vacuum.

## **The BASEMENT**

### **Concrete Floors & Walls**

Concrete surfaces sometimes develop pitting and superficial cracking. Minor cracking which is less than 6mm (width of a \$2 coin) are not warranted, and do not require repair. White powder can appear on walls or floors, and is the result of the salts in the concrete mix being carried to the surface when water in the concrete evaporates in the concrete curing process. The salt deposits do not impair the strength of the concrete.

### **Floor Drains**

The floor drain, located near the furnace or hot water tank area will automatically retain water in a u-shaped trap to seal against gases entering the basement from the municipal sewer system.

Note: The drain is installed near the furnace and hot water tank to collect excess water draining from these items. It is not intended to drain water from the entire basement floor area.

### **Hot Water Tank**

Overheated water in the tank is the principle cause of damage to the tank liner. For safety reasons, the hot water tank is set at a specific temperature when the contractor, who provides them to the builder, installs the tank. Each tank is equipped with a pressure relief valve, which for safety reasons should not be tampered with for any reason. It is designed to open if the water pressure exceeds its rated working range.

Note: It is recommended that you contact the water tank provider if you are experiencing problems, as it is on a rental basis.

## **FRAMING & DRYWALL**

The wood used to construct your house naturally contains moisture, which will dry out and shrink during the year of occupancy, possibly resulting in the following:

- Thin cracks appear in exposed wood structures like joists and beams
- Small gaps appear between cabinets and walls
- Minor joints open in door and window trim, baseboards and door trim
- Squeaks could develop in the sub-floor, wood flooring and stairs
- Small gaps can show up between stairs or stair molding and the walls
- Drywall corners may show hairline cracks
- Framing nails may pop into the drywall, and minor cracks may appear in drywall over doors, windows and archways due to shrinkage of the wood framing behind the drywall, which is considered normal
- It is recommended that you delay painting and decorating plans until the construction material has dried out (approx. 12-18 months)

Use a humidifier and dehumidifier throughout the seasons to balance moisture and prevent cracks in the frames. (ideal balance is between 35% - 50%).

Nirvana Homes will service these minor cracks and nail pops in the walls at the time of your one year occupancy date as a goodwill gesture, so be sure to make note of these items on your Year-End Warranty Form. We will apply compound to the areas, but Nirvana Homes will not sand or repaint any repaired areas. (please refer to the Homeowner Information Book as cracks and nail pops resulting from normal material shrinkage are not warranted).

It is recommended that you refrain from painting or applying wallpaper on drywall surfaces until the end of one (1) year of occupancy to allow the home to settle.

## **INSULATION**

All Nirvana Homes are insulated to meet the Ontario Building Code standards. However, no home is completely free from drafts, and seasonal maintenance is required.

## **WINDOWS & DOORS**

Nirvana Homes provides an insulated metal front entry door, and energy efficient (low E, argon gas-filled) thermopane vinyl casement windows on the main and second floors (excluding basement & garage). All windows and doors are caulked and installed with a vapour barrier.

During cold weather, it may appear there are drafts around windows, which can be caused by the naturally moving air in the house, which moves vertically over the face of the windows, as the warm air from the heat registers will rise, and cooler air drops. Doors and windows are exposed to a variety of weather conditions, including humidity, which varies outside and inside the house.

Interior wood doors and trim may swell in the summer and shrink in the winter as they adjust to the varying dry and humid conditions outside and inside the house. It is advised that you do not cut down or shave interior doors for this reason, but wait until the end of one year of occupancy and request that Nirvana Homes inspect and adjust if required.

Interior doors are installed with sufficient clearance at the bottom to permit adequate air circulation between rooms, or to return air-ducts.

Use a petroleum jelly or silicone lubricant on weather-stripping and window tracks. All weep holes in the bottom track or frame of windows & doors must be kept clean to allow proper water drainage.

Keep the window and doors tracks free of dust, debris & insects on a regular basis to ensure smooth sliding.

Do not paint wood trim around a window or door when it is closed, as the paint will not dry properly and could cause paint transfer or sticking.

Use a dehumidifier (and air conditioning) in the summer and a humidifier in the winter to maintain proper moisture levels in the home, which should keep swelling and shrinkage to a minimum.

## **BATHROOM & KITCHEN FEATURES**

Harsh or abrasive cleaners can scratch smooth or glossy surfaces. Avoid using metal utensils to scrape the surface and exercise care in using household cleaners as they can be slightly abrasive and can leave the finish dull and porous.

### **Tubs and Sinks**

All fixtures contain a water-filled trap to prevent sewer back-up and gases into the home. These traps can become plugged and require regular cleaning to eliminate blockage.

NOTE: Water must be run in all fixtures on a regular basis, or the trap will dry out and allow sewer gases into the house. In the event of an accident in a ceramic or porcelain sink, which chips or defaces the sink, Nirvana Homes suggested that you purchase a touch-up enamel kit from your local plumbing supply store, as this would not be covered under any warranty.

## FLOORING

### Ceramic Tiles

Nirvana Homes installs ceramic tiles in the bathroom in the shower and tub enclosure as a standard feature. You could encounter separating between the grout tile joints and the bathtub. This is caused by material shrinkage, and it is suggested that the gaps be filled immediately with a tub sealer or water-proof silicone sealer compound which is flexible and mildew resistant.

Bathroom tiles should be checked on a regular basis as part of good home maintenance and if any damage is found, it should be repaired immediately to eliminate water penetration, which can cause secondary water damage to the walls & ceilings below.

Drying off bathroom tiles after use will prevent mildew and deterioration of the grout.

Always use a damp mop with mild soap and water to clean ceramic flooring and dry off any excess water immediately.

Ceramic tiles are durable, but may crack or chip if heavy objects fall on the floor.

### Wood Flooring (hardwood & laminate)

Controlling the humidity in the house is extremely important as strip hardwood and laminate flooring are natural products and will absorb moisture under humid conditions causing swelling, and dry out under dry (heated) conditions, causing shrinkage.

During humid summer conditions, we recommend using a dehumidifier in the basement. This will help protect your wood flooring from expansion or warping due to absorbing excessive moisture.

During the dry winter (heating) months, it is recommended that a humidifier system be used. As well as protecting the health of your family, a humidifier system will provide moisture in the air to help eliminate wood floorboard shrinkage.

Colour samples in the Décor Studio are “only” a representation of the final flooring product, so actual colour may vary from manufacturing.

Wood flooring should be cleaned with a vacuum cleaner, dry dust mop or a slightly damp mop. Any spills should be wiped up immediately and dried. Avoid excessive water and harsh detergents, and do not wax the floor as it has been sealed with a clear finish.

Dirt and grit is abrasive and will scratch the polyurethane floor surface and wear off the finish. The floor should be vacuumed or dry mopped daily.

Soft felt protector pads should be used on the bottom of furniture legs, and furniture should not be pulled across the floor.

NOTE: Always maintain a constant moisture balance in the house, as noted above, and use the ventilation fans the house has been provided with to maintain proper air circulation through the house.

### Carpeting

Carpet can keep its original appearance for years if properly maintained and cared for

Remove surface dirt and lint from high traffic areas on a daily basis

Clean up any spills immediately to prevent spots and stains

Regular cleaning of the carpet surface is recommended to remove oily film on carpet fibers.

Ensure your vacuum is properly adjusted to remove embedded dirt on a weekly basis.

Professional carpet cleaning is recommended every 1 or 2 years to prolong the life of the carpet and maintain its original appearance.

Avoid indentations in the carpet by avoiding metal domes on furniture legs.

### **Cabinets**

Cabinets are one of the most visible items in your kitchen and bathrooms, and can be easily maintained and kept in their original appearance by exercising care in cleaning and handling the cabinet surfaces.

Wood cabinets can be cleaned with a soft damp cloth and dried immediately. Harsh abrasives, detergents, or self-polishing waxes should never be used.

Cabinets doors and drawers should be kept closed when not in use.

Periodic use of a silicone spray lubricant on drawers and hinges will improve operating efficiency.

### **Counter Tops**

Standard counter tops installed by Nirvana Homes in the kitchen and bathrooms are laminated with plastic, and regular cleaning should be done to maintain its finish.

Hot pots/pans should not be placed on laminated surfaces. Protective or insulating pad should be used to avoid damaging the surfaces.

Never use an abrasive cleanser, bleach or steel wool to clean the counter surface.

Do not use the surface as a cutting board.

Do not leave standing water or wet cloths at or near counter seams, as it will cause the seams to absorb water and swell, and is not covered by the builder's warranty.

Clean the counter top with a damp, soapy cloth, rinse with clear water, and dry immediately.

## **MANAGING THE EXTERIOR OF YOUR HOME**

With the right care, years can be added to the life of the exterior of a Nirvana Homes. Through regular maintenance programs, costly repairs and time-consuming up-keep of the exterior finishing can be avoided or minimized.

### **Walk-ways, Stairs & Porches**

Concrete slabs are provided from the driveway to the main entry door area, providing access to the house. Seasonal conditions such as ground frost penetration can cause the ground beneath walkways, concrete stairs and driveway to heave or crack, causing changes in the direction of surface drainage. Most areas will return to normal once the frost has left the ground and warming conditions prevail. However, these changes are beyond the control of Nirvana Homes and are not a warranted item by the builder or Tarion. Railings are not installed as standard on porches or stairs unless grade is over 24" below porch level. Following the installation of sod, Nirvana Homes will re-level the walkway.

Nirvana Homes recommends that you do not use calcium salt or artificial ice-melt products, as these will harm any concrete slabs or poured porch or stair areas. Any resulting damage is not covered by the builder or Tarion warranty.

### **Driveways**

Nirvana Homes will ensure that sufficient gravel is spread in the driveway prior to taking occupancy. The gravel will require occasional raking to smooth out wheel impressions. The ground around the home will settle in the first year, and Nirvana Homes will provide additional gravel if major settlement occurs or holes form in the driveway. Nirvana Homes allows one (1) year for all driveways to settle before applying base asphalt paving.

### **Drainage & Grading**

If your property has a rear catch basin, it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain proper drainage at all times, by removing leaves and debris, and keeping the grass and other growth cut.

Your property has been graded in accordance with the approved engineering drawings, which should not be altered, as it can affect the drainage of your property and adjacent properties.

NOTE: Alteration to approved grading and drainage patterns is not warranted and will be rectified at the expense of the homeowner.

### **Sod Maintenance**

Each Nirvana Home receives quality sod, supported with 6" of good top-soil. Depending on construction schedules and weather conditions, sod is usually laid commencing in late spring, through to early fall. However, sodding may not occur in the same season as you take possession of your home.

Once the sod is laid, it is important that each homeowner care for the sod properly. It is suggested that you do not walk on the sod for approx. 2 weeks. In that time period, you will be asked to maintain a strict watering program.

Do not water sod during the day, as it will evaporate and cause burning. It is recommended that you water the entire lawn for at least 1 hour in the morning or the evening.

Sod watering must begin the day the sod is laid to encourage the roots to re-establish and become healthy.

### **Foundation & Garage Walls**

The basement and garage walls are poured concrete, with a curing period of up to one (1) year, during which time you could notice signs of settlement in the form of hairline cracks. Do not be alarmed when hairline cracks appear, we would recommend that you monitor them and if they become larger or moisture appears to be penetrating, please contact the Customer Care Department by completing the Service Request Form on this web site.

### **Garage Floors**

As the garage floor is poured concrete, it is normal to find hairline cracks as the concrete cures, which it will not affect the structural integrity of the floor. Cracks should be monitored, and if they become larger, please contact Nirvana Homes Customer Care for assistance, as cracks in the garage floor are considered warranted by Nirvana Homes and Tarion only if they are significant and affect the structural integrity of the floor.

Do not be alarmed if you notice white powder on areas of the floor, as it is salts in the concrete mix, which are being carried to the surface as part of the curing process. These deposits do not affect the strength of the concrete floor.

It is recommended that the garage floor be sealed with a concrete sealer, which can be purchased from a hardware or paint store. This should be done in warm weather conditions, and after the floor has cured.

NOTE: Nirvana Homes and Tarion do not warranty damage to the garage floor caused by road salt.

### **Masonry (bricks)**

The exterior of a Nirvana Home is finished with baked clay brick, which are guaranteed to retain structural integrity, protect the home during Canadian weather conditions, and retain its natural beauty, colour and texture.

Brick walls contain weeping holes, which you might see. These openings are located at the bottom of exterior brick, on top of the foundation wall, and under window brick sills. These holes should not be covered over or filled, as they allow for the passage of condensation or incidental moisture to the outside through the walls.

You should avoid placing any type of landscaping near the weeping holes. Leave at least six (6) inches below the foundation wall so the weeping hole is unobstructed.

### **Exterior Painting**

Some Nirvana Homes will have exterior wood trim in addition to the exterior painted doors, which will be primed and painted. As all exterior painted surfaces can be exposed to extreme weather condition at times, homeowners should have a regular maintenance program to repaint and maintain its original appearance. Do not paint in cold or damp weather for best results.

### **Caulking**

Nirvana Homes applies an exterior caulking around window openings, piping, and other protrusions found in exterior walls. The sealant will prevent water and air penetration in the interior of the home, and it is suggested that it be checked on an annual basis and re-caulked if necessary, as it is exposed to the exterior weather conditions and can deteriorate.

Always clean the surface of dirt and debris, and remove any damaged caulking with a putty knife before applying new caulking.

### **Wooden Decks**

If your Nirvana Home has a wooden rear deck, it is constructed with pressure treated wood, and should be treated with a special protective coating, as decks are high traffic areas and are exposed to sunlight, rain, snow, sand and dirt.

### **Weather-Stripping**

All windows and doors are equipped with a rubberized weather-stripping sealer, to prevent air infiltration, dust and water penetration into the home. It is recommended that you do an annual inspection to ensure a proper seal is maintained.

Lubricate all weather stripping with a silicone-based lubricant.

Do not paint over weather-stripping.

### **Hose Connections**

All Nirvana Homes will have two (2) exterior hose connections, which have one central shut-off valve in the basement of the house. To prevent freezing and bursting of the pipes, a garden hose should not be left connected during winter or cold conditions, as any ice forming in the hose can damage the hose or the hose faucet. Close off the interior shut-off valve, and open the exterior valves to drain any water left in the pipes.

### **Roof**

Nirvana Homes provides a quality roof, which should provide many years of protections with proper maintenance. Homeowners should inspect the roof following any storm and repair any storm-related damage immediately, as these occurrences are not covered by the Tarion or builder warranty. Minor colour variation in shingles is normal and does not affect the roof's durability.

Asphalt shingles are soft on warm days and can be easily damaged if walked on. Avoid unnecessary traffic on the roof and inspect the roof for damage after heavy storm conditions.

Ice Damage: In severe winter conditions in Ontario, freezing and thawing situations can cause ice to form along the roof edge or in valleys, causing water to back-up under the shingles and lead into the house. Care should be taken to remove snow from these areas, as neither the builder nor Tarion will warrant any damage caused by ice build-up and subsequent water penetration into the interior of the home.

### **Eavestroughs & Downspouts**

Eaves troughs are installed along the roofline and downspouts are placed in predetermined locations to direct water flow to the ground, and away from the house foundations.

Eaves troughs and downspouts should be checked on a regular basis and kept free of debris and obstructions or ice, or they will not function properly and water damage may result which might not be warranted.