

E **EMPIRE** **HOME** **OWNER'S** **GUIDE**



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Welcome

Thank you for choosing Empire Communities! We're confident you and your family will enjoy your Empire Home for years to come.

We recognize that your new home represents an important investment, so a great deal of care, pride and workmanship will be put into building it. This Homeowner's Guide is designed to smooth the transition into your new home and provide the resources you may need to care for it.

It contains a list of useful telephone numbers, answers to common concerns and the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved in the administration of your new home. This will help you find the person best suited to address your concerns.

We also offer tips on how to take care of your home and how to handle concerns you may encounter within your home. While we hope maintenance emergencies never occur, we provide you with information on how to handle them.

You will also find a comprehensive explanation of your warranty coverage through Empire Communities as mandated by Tarion Warranty Corporation, as well as a section with valuable information that will make the closing of your home go smoothly.

A new home is one of the most significant purchases you will ever make. Rest assured we have treated the building of your home with the respect it deserves. We are proud and honoured to add you to the list of distinguished people who live in one of our Empire Communities.



The Empire Team

Sales Team

Our Sales Team assists you through the sales process from the initial introduction of the property through the signing of the Agreement of Purchase and Sale, effectively allowing you to make an informed purchase decision.

Please contact the Sales Team for the following:

- Questions or revisions concerning the Agreement of Purchase and Sale, as well as to obtain additional copies
- If your contact info changes, including your civic or email address
- To provide your solicitor's contact information
- Referral program
- Sales deposit cheques
- Closing costs

To Keep in Mind

Although our Sales Team will do their best to address all your concerns, we encourage you to go over the Agreement of Purchase and Sale carefully. This important document contains legal and binding information about the steps that both you and Empire Communities are required to take. Please consult a solicitor if you have any questions. (Note that any changes must be made by means of a written amendment at the Sales Office. Verbal changes are not legal or binding.)

Contact Information

Please refer to the Community Info section at the end of this guide.

Empire Decor

Our experienced Decor team is there to help you personalize your home so that it suits your taste. As an added convenience, we offer browsing sessions on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am-5pm. We encourage you to browse through our Decor Studio during these sessions, as they provide you with a great opportunity to see what options you have before your scheduled appointment with one of the Decor Consultants.

Please contact the Empire Decor team for the following:

- Your welcome package, which outlines the upgrade options available for the home model you have selected
- Any changes to your upgrades (if construction permits)
- Pricing inquiries and other questions
- Additional options
- Additional upgrades that you may want to purchase
- Your décor deposit cheques
- A copy of your amendment including the purchase price and the cost of upgrades

To Keep in Mind

Our team will contact you to set up the appointment with one of our Decor Consultants on a date based on your closing day. Keeping this appointment helps us place your orders in a timely manner as well as meeting specific target dates based on your closing day. Please do your utmost to keep this appointment. Failure to do so could mean you won't get your upgrades.

For your convenience, we ask that you refrain from bringing children or relatives to the Decor Studio. You need the proper time and space to concentrate on important décor choices.

Contact Information

Please refer to the Community Info section at the end of this guide.

Customer Care

Your Customer Care Representative's primary function is to ensure that your experience is positive. To achieve this, the Customer Care Representative responds to your inquiries from point of sale to your pre-delivery inspection, sets your expectations through education and responds to your correspondence and calls within one business day.

Please contact your Customer Care Representative for the following:

- Status on the construction of your home
- Referral cheques
- Closing inquiries as well as questions regarding closing date changes
- Municipal address
- General inquiries

To Keep in Mind

If you didn't receive your Energy Star package after closing, please contact your on-site Customer Service Office, who will then follow up on your behalf.

Contact Information

Phone: 1 (866) 683-5556
Address: 125 Villarboit Crescent,
Vaughan, ON L4K 4K2

On-Site Customer Service

The Customer Service Office handles warranty items after closing. Each Empire Community has a dedicated Customer Service team that consists of Service Technicians, a Service Administrator and a Home Orientation Representative.

Our Customer Service Office staff will:

- Address items noted on your 30-day, year-end and second-year warranty forms
- Respond to your inquiries, including setting up appointment times
- Conduct a Quality Assurance inspection. Unlike many builders, we take this additional step to help ensure your home is in top-notch condition before you come to the Homeowner Orientation and complete your Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) form

To Keep in Mind

Please submit all Tarion warranty forms to Tarion and provide the on-site Customer Service Office with a copy.

Construction Team

At Empire Communities we believe in building more than great homes: we build great neighbourhoods for you to live in. In other words, we make sure that you feel at home not just within the four walls of your home, but also in the surrounding community. By choosing an Empire Home, you'll benefit from living in a community with higher standards.

The completion of your new Empire Home will be managed by a construction team including a Lead Superintendent, Administrator and depending on the number of homes within your community, one or two Assistant Supervisors. The construction team will ensure your home is built to our quality and care values.

Our Construction Team will:

- Contact you to schedule your framewalk, which will take place before the drywall is installed and after your home has been framed and the electrical rough-in is completed
- Contact you when your keys are ready on closing day
- Address any deficiencies noted on your Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI).
- Coordinate any required curb/sidewalk work, driveway paving, grading and sod.

To Keep in Mind

For your own safety and due to insurance regulations, we request that you do not visit the construction site unless you're accompanied by an Empire Communities representative.

We cannot be responsible for any injury that occurs during an unaccompanied visit to the construction site. Even if accompanied by one of our representatives, we ask that you wear protective footwear — this means no open-toed shoes or sandals are permitted. We will also provide you with a hard hat.

For their own safety, children are not allowed on the site.

Contact Information

For construction inquiries, please contact Customer Care at 1 (866) 683-5556.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I add or delete an item after I complete my final appointment with my Decor Consultant?

Your Decor Consultant will find out whether the production schedule allows for the change. Changes and/or cancellations made after the finalization of the Options Agreement and/or the Colour Chart will be charged a fee of \$500 per item, plus a 10% restocking fee.

Why do upgrades cost more than at the local home renovation store?

Upgrades provided by Empire Communities will be fully installed when you move in, which eliminates potential scheduling changes or the inconvenience that may result from making an independent purchase after closing. Depending on the product, there may also be an extended warranty with the manufacturer. What's more, the upgrade pricing you're given at your Decor appointment is guaranteed until closing.

Why don't we negotiate pricing at Decor?

We like to think that we're giving you the best home for the best price with the best builder upgrade prices. We also believe in treating every single purchaser in a fair and consistent manner. The best way to treat everyone equally is for us to charge everyone the same price.

I like decorated model "A." Will my house be finished like that?

One of the main purposes of our model homes is to show you the many different ways in which you can personalize and decorate your home. That's why the models are decorated with a wide variety of upgrades. We're very proud of the large selection of upgrades available for our homes. At your Empire Decor appointment, your Decor Consultant will be happy to show you all the features included in your home as well as the upgrades.

Can I change my exterior colour package? Can I get a different colour for my front door?

The siting and exterior colour packages are architecturally controlled, which ensures a pleasing streetscape at every turn within your community. Protecting these streetscapes means we cannot allow changes to exterior colour packages.

Why can't I perform any work on my own prior to closing day?

For your own safety and for quality assurance reasons, we cannot allow you to do any work in your home prior to closing day. Should you wish to perform any work on your own you must wait until after closing day. Any independent work will be removed immediately as it can interrupt the production schedule, impede the certification process and void your warranty with Empire Communities.

When can I start renovating my basement?

We recommend that you wait at least two years after closing to do any renovations in your basement. Your home is warranted against water penetration for two years after closing, therefore any finishing (i.e. dry-wall, shelves, etc.) will be removed and not restored to address a leak, should one occur.

Where can I get the working drawings for my home?

Empire Communities does not release the working drawings as they are the property of our architect. However you can view the drawings at your local Municipality's Building Department office.

I'm installing my own air conditioning unit after closing. Is there anything I need to know?

Please check the municipal regulations regarding the placement of the condensor unit. These regulations usually call for air conditioning units to be placed at a certain distance from the property line, away from your neighbours' windows or outdoor living space. You also have to ensure that the subcontractor used does not create a deficiency with Empire's installation as this can potentially void your warranty.

Can I install a fence as soon as I close?

You won't be able to install a fence until final grading approval. Grading approval is a two-step process. Once an engineer hired by Empire Communities approves the grading, the report is sent to the Municipality which must then inspect your lot and approve the grading. This sometimes takes up to two years, which is why we caution homeowners who choose to install a fence prior to this final approval. If a fence is installed and the grading is altered, the Municipality will not give their approval and they will instruct us to do any necessary

grading repairs. This would involve us asking you to remove your fence and giving us access to your yard to make these repairs in order to comply with the Municipality's regulations. Grading deposits will be released only when the grading is certified by Empire Communities and the Municipality.

I paid for a tree, does that mean I'll have one? If not, will I be refunded the money I paid?

All homeowners pay for tree planting/landscaping, which ensures the community is sustainable and aesthetically pleasing. This landscaping also adds value, enhances the quality of life, provides shade to pedestrians and provides a natural environment. However, the location of the trees is determined by the distance from the driveways, hydrants, lights and more. This means the Municipality's pre-approved plan may not allow for a tree to be planted on your property. In this case, no fee will be refunded as it's meant to cover tree planting and landscaping in the entire community and not just on a particular property.

I had a verbal agreement with someone in your organization. Will you fulfill that agreement?

We're committed to fulfilling our obligations as noted in your Agreement of Purchase and Sale and we're confident you'll be as proud of your Empire Home as we are. That said, we're unable to fulfill any verbal agreements. We recommend you get all commitments pertaining to your home in writing. Included features are noted in your Schedule "B," which is part of your Agreement of Purchase and Sale, while upgrades are noted in your Options Agreement.

Why isn't my central vacuum system complete?

We only provide a rough-in — the pipes are run through and dropped to the unfinished area in the basement or the garage. It's your responsibility to connect the system through the basement into the garage and from the garage to the canister. You can purchase the complete system through Decor.

Why can't I have a garage door or windows on the side wall?

For windows to be placed on any wall, the Ontario Building Code (OBC) requires a minimum distance of 1.2m from the wall to the lot line. No windows or doors can be installed on a wall that does not meet the minimum required distance.

Who is responsible for setting up the utilities for my closing day?

You should contact the utility companies and post office to set up an account. This should be done approximately one month prior to your closing day. (Please see the list of phone numbers at the end of this Homeowner's Guide.)

How do I get my keys on my close date?

The Site Administrator will contact you when the keys are ready for pick up. Closings occur between 2-5pm once the transfer of title has taken place.

How do I submit my warranty forms?

You can now complete your warranty forms on the Tarion website at www.tarion.com. The homeowner information package will also be emailed to you prior to your closing date. You can submit a copy to the on-site Customer Service Office. Once they receive the warranty form they will schedule an appointment to review the noted items.



Construction

Site Safety

Construction sites can be dangerous places. Children are not permitted on site. Due to insurance regulations and for your and your family's safety, we request that you do not visit the construction site unless:

- You're accompanied by an Empire Communities representative and
- It's either closing day, the pre-scheduled Frame Walk, or Homeowner Orientation

We care for the safety of your family. We cannot be responsible for any injury that occurs during an unaccompanied visit to the construction site. Even if accompanied by one of our representatives, we ask that you wear protective footwear — this means no open-toed shoes or sandals are permitted. We will also provide you with a hard hat.

Inspections

Many inspections are conducted on your home. Each one is very important in the construction process and the meeting of your closing day. A rigorous set of municipal inspections helps ensure the construction of your home complies with the Ontario Building Code (OBC).

Construction Timelines

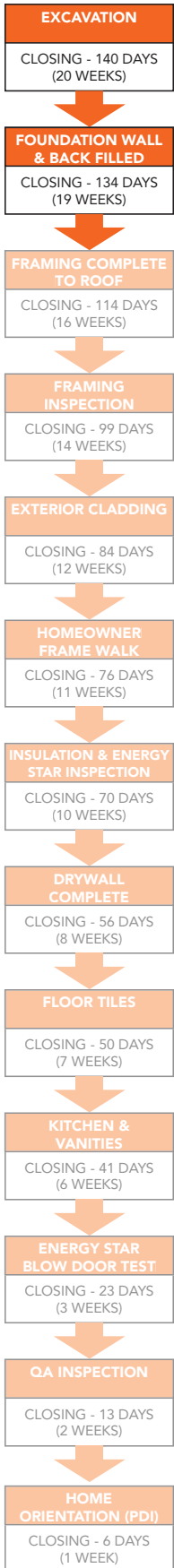
In this section you'll find an approximate construction timeline for your home. It will help you understand the construction process and get a better idea of what to expect.

A long series of steps are taken to make sure your home is completed by the scheduled closing day. We do our best to make sure each stage is finished on time. (Please note that there may be slight changes to the order of certain tasks due to trade availability or weather.)

To Keep in Mind

For your home materials to be ordered on time and production of items to be kept on track, it's critical that you meet and complete your Design Appointment.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**



Excavation



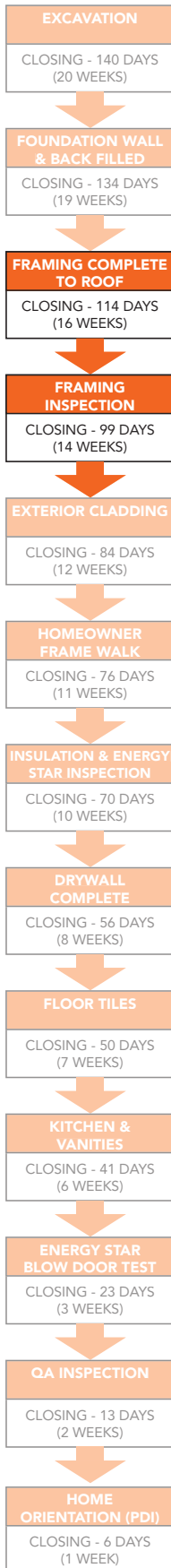
Our Customer Care Liaison will notify you of milestones throughout the construction process, such as the start of your home.

Foundation Wall & Back Filled



Prior to the backfill of your foundation, the Municipality conducts a back-fill inspection to ensure that the foundation weeper system is installed in accordance to OBC standards.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**

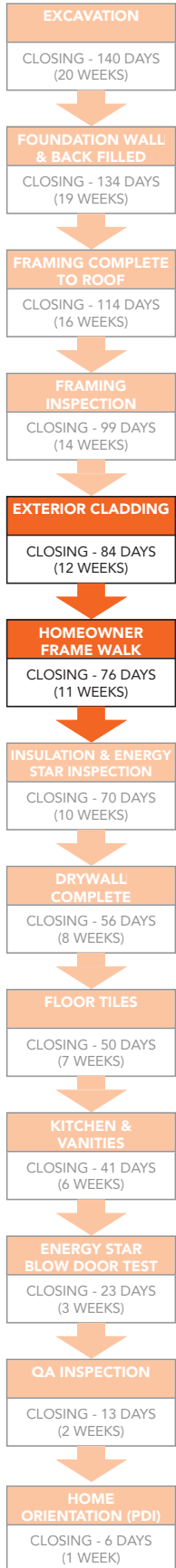


You'll also be notified when the roof is complete.



A City Inspector will conduct a framing inspection. We'll be able to continue with the construction of your home when your home has passed this inspection.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**



Exterior Cladding



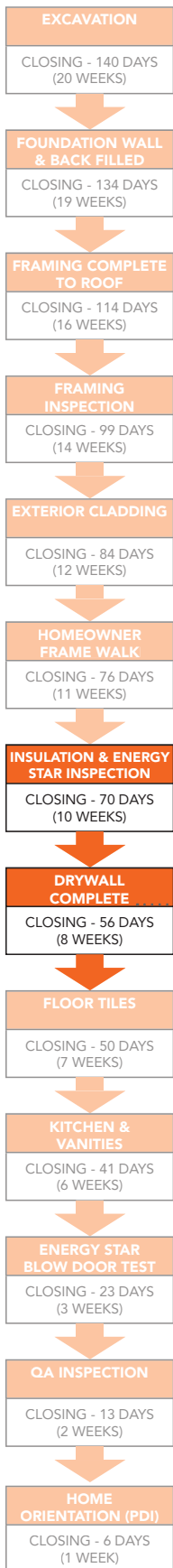
Your home is now just over 50% complete!

Homeowner Frame Walk



The Site Administrator will contact you to schedule your Frame Walk. (Please make sure the Sales Office has your updated contact info.) This is a great opportunity to meet your Construction Superintendent and to see how the construction process is coming along. Frame Walk appointments take approximately one hour and are scheduled Monday through Friday between the hours of 8am-4pm.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**

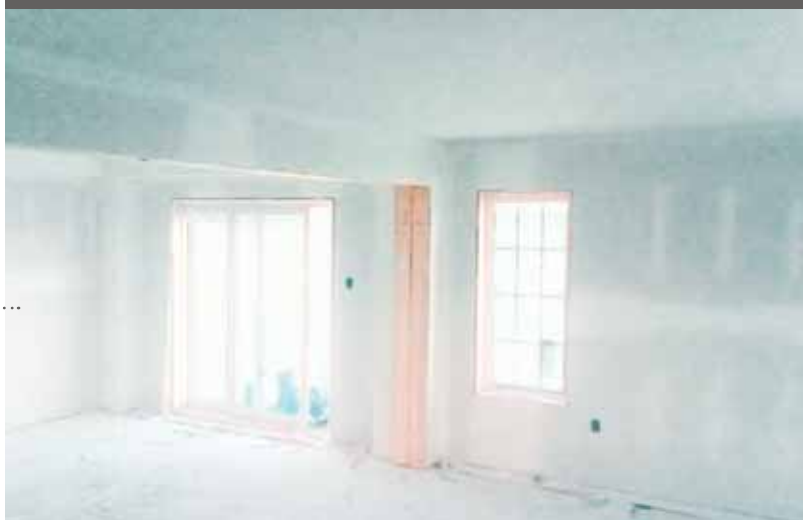


Insulation & Energy Star Inspection



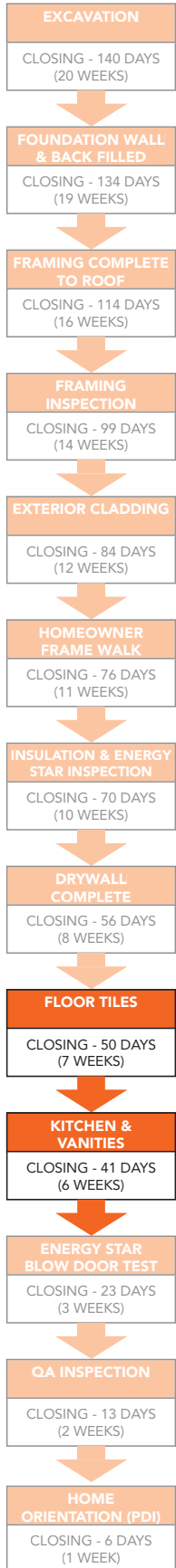
A Municipal Inspector will ensure your home has the proper insulation. Empire’s New Home Energy Specialist will also inspect your home to ensure it’s fairly airtight so that it meets Energy Star standards. You will receive your Energy Star certification at your PDI or shortly after you take possession of your home.

Drywall Complete



Your closing day is fast approaching. This would be a great time to schedule a mover and contact the utility companies to set up an account.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**



Floor Tiles

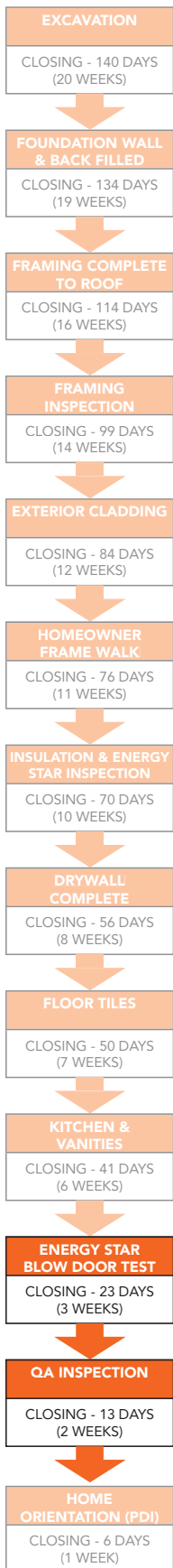
We lay the floor tiles before we install the interior trim. Then the drywall is checked, the fireplace installed and the interior paint completed. This is the last step before we move on to the kitchen and vanities.



Kitchen & Vanities

Your dream home is almost ready!

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**

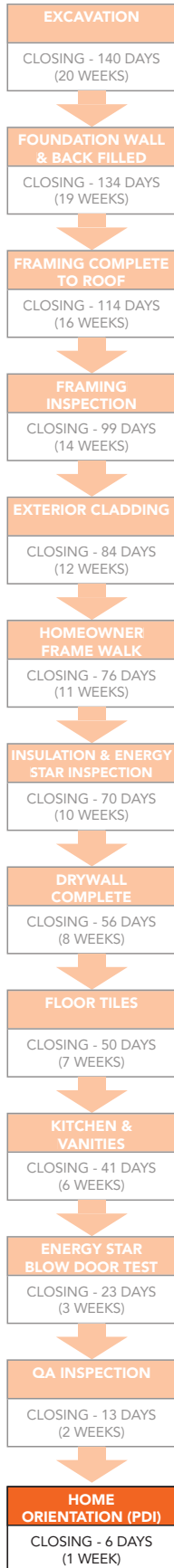


An independent third-party conducts a blow door test to confirm the air tightness of your home. This would be a good time to contact your solicitor and financial institution to ensure everything is in order for your closing day.



Unlike many builders, we conduct a thorough Quality Assurance (QA) inspection prior to the Home Orientation to help ensure your home is in top-notch condition.

**APPROXIMATE
TIMELINE**



Taking place approximately one week before closing, the Home Orientation is your first opportunity to note any deficiencies in your new home, which will be noted on the Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) form. We aim to repair these deficiencies by the time of closing or shortly thereafter (aside from seasonal items). Your Home Orientation Specialist will also explain how to use your home's Energy Star components and offer maintenance tips like how to best care for your countertop and bathtubs.



Preparing For Closing

The following information will help make the closing of your home go smoothly.

Lawyer

Please ensure that you have provided our Sales Team with your lawyer's contact information so that our solicitor can give him or her the closing documents. This usually happens two to five days prior to your closing day.

Utilities

We highly recommend you contact all applicable utility companies at least one month prior to your closing day. This will ensure they have enough time to set up the accounts for your home.

You will need to provide the utility companies with your new home address and contact information. (For a listing of all the contact numbers for the services you require for your new home, please refer to the end section of this guide.)

Closing Day

Closings usually take place between 2-5pm once the transfer of title has taken place. Our Site Administrator will notify you that your keys are ready for pick-up at the construction trailer.

Please note that you will not be able to store/install anything in your home or on the property until you officially close.

Shortly after closing, you will receive a survey from an independent research firm. We value your feedback — it allows us to measure our progress and make necessary improvements in our commitment to building a quality home and making home ownership a satisfying and rewarding experience.



WARRANTY
PROGRAM

Warranty Program

Warranty Coverage & Service Requests

The Empire Communities New Home Warranty Program provides you with peace of mind as we are committed to honouring the terms and conditions of this warranty.

The warranty is divided into four parts: 30-Day Warranty, Year-End Warranty, Two-Year Warranty and Seven-Year Warranty. For further information, please visit www.tarion.com.

30-Day Warranty Service

It's quite common to notice new items requiring warranty attention after you've taken possession. Please ensure you list any deficiencies on your 30-Day Warranty Service Request Form, which can be found at www.tarion.com. It's very important to be as descriptive as possible in order for us to determine how to resolve these issues for you.

This form must be submitted to both the Tarion Warranty Program and your Empire Communities on-site Customer Service Office. Tarion will only accept one form at this time; therefore, if you find any new (non-emergency) items after the submission, please save them for your year-end request. Note that this form must only contain warranty requests and cannot exceed the 30-day expiration period.

Year-End Warranty Service

Since it can take up to several months for various natural materials in your home to condition and settle, you might find additional items which need to be dealt with under the one-year warranty. It's important that we receive your list before the warranty expires so that we can make sure nothing has been overlooked.

Empire Communities warrants your home free of defects in materials and workmanship for one year from the date of possession. You should complete the year-end form provided in your Homeowner Information Package. Please submit a copy to Tarion Warranty Corporation, as well as your on-site Customer Service Office just prior to the one year since you took possession, as Tarion will not accept any forms after your year-end expires. All service requests must be made in writing.

The following items are warranted to be free from defects in materials and workmanship:

- Air conditioning system
- Carpets
- Tiles
- Cabinets
- Vanities
- Countertops
- Caulking
- Grouting
- Concrete floors and walls (interior/exterior)
- Bathtubs
- Sinks
- Showers
- Flooring
- Fireplace
- Exterior hardware/locks
- Exterior faucets and doors
- Eavestroughs and downspouts
- Driveway
- Interior walls
- Doors
- Windows and frames
- Garage doors
- Roof and stained/painted exterior wood

Two-Year Warranty Service

At this stage, Empire warrants the workability of the plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilating, air conditioning and other mechanical systems. This warranty coverage begins on the date you take possession and ends on the day of the second anniversary.

The following specific events are covered under this warranty:

- Water penetration through the basement or foundation walls
- Defects in materials/workmanship in relation to electrical, plumbing, heating delivery and distribution systems
- Defects in materials/workmanship which cause the detachment, displacement or deterioration of exterior cladding
- Major structural defects
- Any issues which infringe on the Ontario Building Code's health and safety provisions

Seven-Year Warranty Service

Once the one- and two-year warranties provided by Empire Communities have expired, your five-year coverage comes into effect. This warrants against major structural defects, which are defined as the failure of a load-bearing part of your home's structure or any structural defects that adversely affect the use of your home. This coverage begins on the date you take possession and ends on the day of the seventh anniversary.

Seasonal Warranty Service

Special Seasonal Warranty items are items on the exterior of or outside your home that can only be repaired effectively in favourable weather conditions. The period from May 1 to November 15 is generally considered to have suitable weather for making such repairs.

Seasonal Warranty items include:

- Exterior painting
- Exterior cement/concrete work (including parging application/repair)
- Exterior mortar work (including brick installation/repair)
- Exterior stucco work/repairs (including repairs to exterior insulation finishing systems)
- Exterior caulking
- In-ground support for decks

Special Seasonal Warranty items include:

- Final grading
- Landscaping (laying sod)
- Installation of driveway pavement

These items should be listed on your 30-day, year-end or second-year form, as appropriate.

Items Not Covered By Warranty

Please read the following section before submitting your warranty requests. The items listed are often the cause of misunderstandings, since they are not covered by either your one-year and two-year warranties unless specifically identified at the time of your Home Orientation. This list is by no means comprehensive, so please refer to Tarion's Homeowner Information Package on their website www.tarion.com.

Summary of items excluded from the warranty:

- Any damage to surfaces, including but not limited to: chipped or damaged floor materials including vinyl, ceramic tiles or carpet; scratched cupboards, countertops or hardwood flooring; dented or scratched walls, stairs, railings or pickets — any other surface damages not specifically identified during the PDI
- Floor squeaks and creaks which are a result of normal shrinkage of natural materials
- Nail pops and drywall shrinkage cracks which are also a result of normal shrinkage of natural materials
- Insects, rodents or birds entering your property or home
- Cracks in basement or garage floor slabs — again a consequence of shrinkage (unless greater than 6mm)
- Settlement on driveways and/or the land around your property
- Any defects directly due to lack of or improper maintenance on your part as a homeowner
- Water damage to countertops — miter joints are only water resistant, not waterproof
- Adjustments to garage doors if an automatic door opener has been installed by anyone other than the builder

For more information on any of the above warranties and general exclusions, please visit the Tarion website at www.tarion.com.



Emergencies

Emergency Warranty Service

If you experience an emergency during regular business hours (Monday to Friday from 8am-5pm) please contact your community's on-site Customer Service Office. (See the back of this guide for contact information.)

After Hours Emergencies

If you experience an emergency after regular business hours, please call 1-888-750-8024 for guidance. Your call will be answered by an operator who will take your message and forward it to our on-call Empire Communities associate. Your call will be returned within one hour during the hours of operation. We will then guide you through the resolution process.

For any non-emergency issues, we ask that you please call the Community Service office during regular business hours.

Please note that this is NOT a 24-hour service.

The hours of operation are:

Monday to Friday: 5pm-11pm

Weekends and Holidays: 9am-5pm

The following events are considered an emergency:

- Complete loss of heat, electricity or water
- Stoppage of sewage disposal
- Gas leaks
- Plumbing leak that requires the entire water supply to be shut off
- Major collapse of any part of the home's exterior or interior structure
- Major water penetration on the interior walls or ceilings
- A large pool of standing water inside the home

Identifying the Problem

The following steps will help identify the nature of the problem. We recommend you go through this list before calling the emergency line.

No Heat

- Review and check instructions on sticker located on the furnace
- Check furnace vents outside to ensure they are not blocked with snow
- Check condensate line at the furnace to ensure

water is flowing and not backing up into the furnace

- Turn off main switch for furnace, wait a few minutes and then turn furnace back on to see if furnace will start working
- Check furnace filter to ensure that it is clean and not causing a blockage

No Hydro

Please note if a light is not working this is not considered an emergency. Power failure on an electrical outlet or appliance is not an emergency either.

- Try resetting the ground fault interruptor (GFI), which should be located in one of the bathrooms
- Check the breakers to ensure that they are all on
- Check outside to see if there is power on the street

No Water

Do you have no water throughout your entire home or just portions of your home? If there is a total loss of water, contact the City first and inquire whether work is being done in your neighbourhood.

If it's just portions of your home, the problem could be frozen pipes. Similarly, if you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out, suspect a frozen pipe. Locate the suspected frozen area of the water pipe. Likely places include pipes running against exterior walls or where your water service enters your home through the foundation.

To thaw frozen pipes:

- Keep the faucet open. As you treat the frozen pipe and the frozen area begins to melt, water will begin to flow through the frozen area. Running water through the pipe will help melt more ice in the pipe
- Apply heat to the section of pipe using an electric heating pad wrapped around the pipe, an electric hair dryer, a portable space heater (kept away from flammable materials), or by wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. DO NOT use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame device. A blowtorch can make water in a frozen pipe boil, which could cause the pipe to explode. All open flames in homes present a serious fire danger and a severe risk of exposure to lethal carbon monoxide
- Apply heat until full water pressure is restored
- Check all other faucets in your home to find out if you have additional frozen pipes. (If one pipe freezes, others may freeze, too)



Home Care

Exterior Home Care

Air Conditioning System

If purchased with your home, the air conditioning system is guaranteed under warranty to be free of defects in workmanship and materials for one year from your closing day. However, should anyone other than an Empire Communities contractor work on the system, we won't be able to accept responsibility for any problems that may arise.

It's important to keep in mind that temperatures can vary from room to room by several degrees. This is due to the floor plan, type of window coverings used, orientation of the homesite and traffic throughout the home.

Although air conditioning enhances the comfort of your home, it can also result in wasted energy if used improperly or inefficiently. The following suggestions will help you make the most of your air conditioning system:

- Contrary to popular belief, maintaining a constant temperature at the thermostat results in greater savings. On the other hand, turning the air conditioning off and leaving the windows open will transfer heat indoors, which means more electricity will be consumed to cool down the house again once you turn the air conditioning back on. That's why you should avoid increasing the temperature before you leave for the day or go on vacation — it will only result in greater energy consumption
- Make sure the filter is clean. This ensures optimal performance and a long life for your air conditioning system, plus it maximizes air circulation. In a new home the filter may need to be replaced weekly for the first few months. After that, filter changes should be done on a monthly basis, since outdoor pollutants, grass clippings and neighbourhood construction dirt will affect the overall performance of the air conditioner. Also, it's beneficial to switch off the air conditioner before the winter season

Concrete Slabs

Concrete slabs, porches, garage floors and walkways are guaranteed under warranty to be free of defects in workmanship and materials for one year after closing.

Frost in the ground can cause concrete slabs in walkways to settle or heave. These minor sinking or heaving slab walkways are due to normal settlements and are not covered under the warranty. They are also easy to correct in the spring— just lift the slab and level the ground to make it even with the others.

Deterioration of precast concrete slab surfaces may occur from the application of salts and de-icers or from road salt deposits and is therefore not covered under warranty. Cleaning of these surfaces is part of normal home maintenance.

Drainage

To determine site grading, we must conform to a municipally approved grading plans. Once the homesite is sodded, engineers will make sure it complies with the municipal grading plan. A certification will then be issued to the municipality. As the builder, we must comply with the overall intent of the grading plan and cannot alter it even if you're not satisfied with the grade. Please note that you must obtain Empire's approval after reviewing with our engineers, before installing a deck or fence. In accordance with Tarion's guidelines, the statutory warranty will only apply if water accumulates at or near the building/foundation walls. All other areas of the homesite are left for the municipality to govern.

The grading of your homesite ensures positive drainage away from your home. If you alter the drainage, you could create a problem for neighbours. Empire Communities cannot be held responsible for drainage problems if the original grading was altered.

It's your responsibility to maintain lot drainage systems such as swales and catch basins. This entails removing leaves, debris, snow and ice. Minor settlements due to

soil disturbances around the dwelling unit, walkways, utility lines and sodded areas are beyond our control and are therefore your responsibility. Removing the sod and leveling the topsoil will help correct these areas.

Concrete splash pads are placed underneath each downpipe that discharges on grassed areas. They assist in moving water away from your home. We recommend that you do not remove the splashpads.

Driveway Paving

The standard driveway is a two-stage asphalt paved driveway completed with a base and finish top coat (as per your Schedule "B"). It's covered for one year against demonstrated defects in work or the material we have supplied.

Asphalt is a flexible and specialized surface. Like any other surface in your home, it requires protection. Over time the effects of weather and earth movement will cause minor settling and cracking. These are normal reactions to the elements and do not mean the asphalt was improperly installed or that defective materials were used.

It's important to avoid using your driveway for one week after it is paved. Please keep people, bicycles, lawn mowers and any other traffic off.

Watering down your paveway on hot days will help cure it sooner.

Some suggestions for repairing slight cracks include:

- Roughening the edges of the cracks if they are smooth
- Cleaning out loose material and dirt
- Wetting the surrounding concrete around the crack and filling the cracks with patching cement slightly higher than the crack to allow for shrinkage

Once every two to five years you will also want to reseal your driveway. Resealing means applying a thin coat of asphalt sealer on top of the existing driveway, which not only protects it but also makes it more aesthetically appealing.

Care should be exercised to prevent spillage of gasoline, motor oil or other solvents that would damage and dissolve the asphalt. If a spill does occur, immediate action is necessary to prevent permanent structural and/or aesthetic damage. Steps include:

- Using absorbent material to remove excess spilled substance
- Flushing the surface with water from a hose to wash away and/or dilute the product spilled
- Using a mild household detergent with a degreaser and a soft brush with non-metallic bristles to thoroughly scrub the spill area, then re-rinsing with water

Eavestroughs & Downspouts

Keeping gutters and downspouts free of obstruction, including debris, ice, leaves, paper and asphalt shingles will keep your eavestroughs and downspouts in good working condition, preventing water damage to your home.

Foundation Walls

Cracks

Foundation and basement walls are subject to many stresses and strains and may naturally crack during their curing due to shrinkage. Cracks are usually located at corners, beam pockets and basement windows.

Surface cracks, which occur from normal shrinkage, are considered acceptable as they do not affect the strength of the walls. As such, they're not covered by the warranty. (Note that you can repair surface cracks using a waterproof, non-shrink grout.)

On the other hand, cracks in excess of 6mm or leaking will be repaired within the Two-Year Warranty.

Leaks

Foundation leaks that occur within the two-year warranty period will be repaired. However, leaks caused by one of the following are excluded from the warranty:

- Improper maintenance
- Exterior grade alterations you made, or an act of God or failure of municipality services or other utility services

Should there be a leak, we recommend you take immediate steps to prevent damage to your property. You should also report any losses to your insurance provider.

Secondary damage to property or personal injury resulting from the leak is excluded from the statutory warranty.

If you don't maintain adequate ventilation in your home, dampness or condensation may occur, causing damage to your home. You can reduce moisture levels in the air by using a dehumidifier and by closing the windows to prevent the humid air outside from entering. You can also increase ventilation by running the furnace fan and air conditioner as required.

Parging

Parging is applied around the visible areas of the foundation. Please note that hairline cracks resulting from normal drying and shrinkage of materials following construction are considered normal and are not covered by the statutory warranty. A slight variation in the colour or texture of repaired areas is acceptable.

Garage Overhead Doors

The garage door is a large moving object, so periodic maintenance is necessary.

To keep moving parts and tracks in smooth working order, rollers, hinges, springs and bearings should be lubricated with an oil-based lubricant three times per year. Do not use oil on the lock, as it will stiffen in the winter and make the lock difficult to operate.

If not listed on the Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) form, damaged garage doors become your responsibility. If a garage door opener has been installed by an individual that was not contracted by Empire Communities, you will not be covered under the statutory warranty. Homeowners who install their own automatic garage door openers will void the warranty on the operation of the doors.

Minor gapping under the garage door when closed is not warranted. Garage doors are not required to be weather-stripped. Snow and water might enter the garage.

Landscaping

Well-designed landscaping prevents erosion and protects the foundation of your home. It's your responsibility to maintain landscaping.

Sod

You're also responsible for watering and nurturing your sod after it's installed and your home has closed. Sod that is alive when installed and subsequently dies will not be replaced. Nor is sod that dies due to improper maintenance included in the statutory warranty.

If no one is home during the day of installation, please leave your hoses and sprinklers accessible to our sod contractor. Ensure your exterior taps are in working order and your valve is turned on in the basement to allow water to the hose bib.

If you find gaps in between pieces of sod, this is usually due to not enough watering. Adding top soil and grass seed in between these pieces will help it grow back together and provide a more uniform look. Please note we are not required to repair these areas.

Empire Communities installs sod in blocks of homes, so it's not possible to install sod according to closing days. You will be notified of the installation date (weather permitting). Your lawn will require immediate maintenance and care. Although the lawn is alive when installed, it will not remain this way unless you follow these steps:

Tips

- Water your lawn frequently and avoid watering in the hot sun. It's best to water in the early morning. Watering later in the day creates a shallow root system and makes the lawn susceptible to burning
- If it's 25°C or higher, the sod must be watered every day. If you're going away, ask a neighbour to water your lawn for you to promote root development
- When the sod is first laid, it should be watered generously for 3 days. During the first month, we recommend that you minimize walking on sodded areas, especially drainage-related areas such as side swales. This will prevent ponding caused by footprints
- After the initial 3-day "soaking period," your lawn should be watered for about two hours a day in the early morning for approximately one week. Please avoid over-watering your lawn because saturation of sod can be just as deadly as lack of water
- Your lawn should be cut initially two to three weeks after being laid; however, to avoid the risk of lawn burning, it should not be cut too short
- Avoid walking on freshly laid sod. The topsoil underneath is soft from watering, so footprints could cause damage. We recommend you re-roll your sod in the following spring
- Do not fertilize fresh sod that has already been fertilized at the sod farms. It's best to wait until the following season or even until the next year

- Please note that the establishment of your lawn and any damage resulting from improper maintenance is the homeowner's responsibility (i.e. dead sod, weed maintenance). Please also note that Empire Communities is not responsible for rodent damage, insect infestation or disease to lawns
- Beautiful lawns are the result of TLC — Tender Loving Care

Trees

Trees are a part of the subdivision agreement with the municipality and are the property of that particular municipality. The trees planted by Empire Communities are guaranteed under warranty for one year. However, it's your responsibility to:

- Avoid planting any flowers or shrubs at the base of any tree
- Ensure the base is covered by lots of soil
- Make sure the tree is watered frequently and fertilized in the spring
- Protect it in the winter with plastic tree guards

Flowerbeds

Please ensure your flowerbeds are at least 6" below the brick line to avoid affecting the grading or brickwork of the house.

Also remember that if you leave the ground un-landscaped, it will erode. Correcting any erosion that occurs after closing is your responsibility.

Locks

Locksets are factory-finished with a clear protective "brilliance" coating that is electronically applied and very durable.

- Use warm soapy water to clean door hardware and locks
- Lubricate door with graphite or other waterproof lubricant, as oil will gum up
- Do not use solvent-based cleaners as they will eat away the finish
- Eventually the coating will wear off and the brass will tarnish. You can restore the appearance by polishing with a brassware-cleaning compound. Follow the same procedure with other brass hardware

Masonry/Brick

This is guaranteed under warranty to be free of defects in workmanship or materials for two years after closing. Cracks in masonry or mortar less than 1/8" (3mm) in width or length are considered to be insignificant and are not covered under the warranty.

Painting/Staining

Your colour selection sheets are your record of the paint colours used in your home.

Painted surfaces must be washed gently using mild soap and as little water as possible. Avoid abrasive cleaners, scouring pads or scrub brushes. Flat paints show washing marks more easily than glossy paints.

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

Please note that exterior painting is done only once. Also, as sunlight can affect paint over time, it's your responsibility to maintain it.

Plan of Survey

Your lawyer will receive a plan of survey at the time of closing. If you intend to build a fence on your property, we strongly suggest that you hire a legal surveyor to confirm the boundaries of your property line.

Stakes are installed at the time the subdivision is created. After installation there is always the possibility that they may become buried, bent or removed. We do not reset the property stakes after closing as they could get damaged and give incorrect boundary information.

Empire Communities cannot guarantee that the location of the existing stakes is correct and will not be held responsible for any issues that may arise for fences that were installed using the stakes.

Hiring a legal surveyor is the only way for you to confirm the true extent of your property. In the end, it will save you time and money. Encroaching a fence or an object on another homeowner's property may result in the costly removal of those items.

Roofs/Shingles

Flat Roofs

Flat roofs found on balconies may have standing water. Flat roofs are typically slow to drain, so they are designed to handle exposure to standing water over a short term period. Some standing water is normal and should generally dissipate after a few days.

Ice Buildup

Ice and icicles are a natural occurrence on roofs. They occur when the roof surface is warm enough to melt the snow, but the air temperature is cold enough to refreeze the melted water. Professional removal of buildups of ice and snow can help reduce the likelihood of water leaks. This is not warranted and it's your responsibility to clean off the excess snow or ice.

Shingles

The shingles carry a limited manufacturer's warranty. There are no recommended chemical treatments that will protect your roof from the sun, wind, rain and snow. Keeping the roof free of fallen debris is your best protection against these elements.

Clean your roof and eavestroughs periodically or at least once a year. You can use a broom to remove debris such as leaves and tree branches. This process will keep moisture from seeping into the shingles and causing leaks that can lead to long-term damage.

Water leakage resulting from improper maintenance or an act of God is excluded from the statutory warranty. Secondary damage to property resulting from water penetration is also excluded from the statutory warranty.

Per the statutory warranty, roof shingles are covered for one year. Severe weather and wind gusts can sometimes exceed the design limitations of the shingles. Winds in excess of 100km per hour may cause shingles to blow off. You should perform maintenance repairs immediately to prevent leakage that can cause serious damage to the interior. Storm-related damage is not the responsibility of Empire Communities.

Surface

Slight variations may be observed in the roof's surface. This may be a "puckering" of the plywood or the raising of shingles between nails caused by normal expansion. Due to extremes in temperature, these variations cannot be prevented. If you decide to install a satellite or wireless system through the roof/shingles, we cannot be held responsible for any damage or water penetration in this area.

Siding

Siding expands and contracts in response to changes in humidity and temperature. Slight waves are visible in siding under certain weather conditions; this cannot be entirely eliminated. Also, wind may cause siding to rattle. This is natural and nothing to worry about.

To clean siding, lightly wipe any obvious dirty areas first using a long-handled brush and a mild non-abrasive detergent, then hose the siding gently. DO NOT use a high-pressure stream as this may force water through the siding and into the walls.

Walls

Walls are warranted to be free of defects in workmanship and materials for a period of one year. Cracks and joints in the exterior wall surfaces do not affect the strength of the wall. However, these must be properly caulked to prevent water entry using a waterproof, non-shrink grout.

Wooden Decks, Fences & Handrails

If due to grading conditions you receive a wooden deck, please note the materials used have been factory-treated to give you resistance against rotting. Damages caused by improper maintenance or additions are excluded from the warranty, as are any alterations you make.

Due to the nature of pressure-treated wood, cracking, shrinkage, checking warping and cupping are considered normal. Generally the following are not considered to be warranty repair issues:

- Knot holes shrinkage
- Cracking or falling out
- Tannic acid stains bleeding
- Colour fastness

Periodically repaint wooden structures or brush on a new coat of wooden sealer. We do not stain exterior decks or handrails.

Interior Home Care

Alarm

As the homeowner, you are responsible for arranging and paying for your own alarm system. The alarm monitoring company will usually provide any alarm system training required as per your necessities.

Appliances

All electrical and gas appliances in your new home which were purchased through Empire Communities are accompanied by instruction manuals and warranty information.

We encourage you to review all manufacturers' service manuals for operation and maintenance instructions. If an electric appliance fails, make sure the appliance is plugged in and that no circuit breakers are tripped in the OFF position. If a gas appliance fails to work, make sure the pilot light is lit. Please report damages or defects within 24 hours.

In the event of a gas leak, leave the home immediately and call the utility company.

If you need to contact the manufacturer of an appliance you purchased, be prepared to give them the following information:

- Date of purchase (closing)
- Serial and model numbers
- A description of the problem

Attic

Your attic is sufficiently ventilated to provide good air exchange. However, we strongly recommended that you check after each heavy snow storm to remove any snow that has seeped through the vents before melting occurs. Damage to interior finishes resulting from this condition is not warrantable.

It's very important not to use this space as storage — the added weight may cause deflection and ceiling cracks, interfere with the insulation and air barriers and interrupt moisture resistance.

Basement

Condensation is very common in a new home. However, this is a temporary problem that usually subsides after the first year of occupancy. To alleviate this, increase ventilation through the use of floor, ceiling and exhaust fans. We recommend you purchase a dehumidifier to help dry your home out.

Cabinets

If you selected wood or wood veneer cabinets, expect differences in grain and colour between and within the cabinet components due to natural variations in the wood and the way it takes to stain. Cherry wood doors will have minor pits in the wood. Thermofoil doors will peel if subjected to heat or steam. Make sure you keep the stove vents on when cooking and keep kettles, coffee makers, slow cookers and toasters away from the cabinets when in use, also avoiding contact with steam.

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

Any damage to cabinets must be noted on the Pre-Delivery Inspection form to ensure your warranty coverage.

Damages not noted on the PDI are not covered under warranty.

- Use a mild non-abrasive soap and a damp cotton cloth to clean your cabinetry. Do not use harsh chemical cleaners or bleaching agents. Do not use too much water as excess water can damage your cabinets, which is not covered under your warranty
- Never hang damp cloths or dishtowels over cabinet doors, as the moisture can cause permanent peeling and discolouration. Excessive home humidity may warp cabinet doors. Smoke from cigarettes or pipes can also discolour cabinets
- From time to time, the screws on the cabinet door hinges may come loose. Use a screwdriver to adjust and tighten the doors

Carbon Monoxide & Fire Safety

High concentration levels of carbon monoxide (CO) can cause death.

If the alarm sounds on your CO detector you should:

- Call the fire department
- Open up the doors and windows to get fresh air into the house
- Turn off your ventilation system including all fans

You should have at least one fire extinguisher in your home. Ensure everyone knows how to use it and where to find it.

Caulking

Caulking and grouting has been applied around tubs, sinks, countertops and thresholds to help prevent water from penetrating to the wood or drywall surfaces beneath.

You should conduct periodic inspection and maintenance, as all caulking and grouting will degrade over time. This may lead to water leakage and result in damage to walls, floors and ceilings, so we strongly recommend you re-caulk as needed. Remember to remove old caulking before reapplying.

Caulking compounds and dispenser guns are available at your local hardware store. (Different types are listed below.) Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to be certain that you select an appropriate caulk for the intended purpose. It's your responsibility to maintain caulking or silicone. Any damage caused will not be the responsibility of Empire Communities.

- Coloured caulking: Coloured caulking is available where larger selections are provided. As with any coloured material, dye lots can vary
- Latex caulking: Latex caulking is appropriate for the area that requires painting, such as along the stair stringer or where the wood trim meets that wall
- Silicone caulking: Caulking that contains silicone will not accept paint. It works best where water is present, for example where the tub meets tile or the sink meets the countertop
- Exterior caulking: Areas that require regular re-caulking include windows, doors, exterior penetrations, eavestrough corners and metal roof flashings at brick

Central Vacuum System

If your home is equipped with a central vacuum rough-in, the outlets have been installed in different locations on finished floor levels to allow a 30-ft. long hose to reach all carpeted rooms. These outlets are connected to plastic pipe conduits that lead to the basement or garage for future hook-up and completion of the system. The canister of your central vacuum along with the filters should be cleaned monthly.

A central vac rough-in means that the pipes are installed in the finished walls on your first and second floor. They are then dropped to the basement (unfinished area). It's your responsibility to either connect the canister in the basement or take the pipe from the drop in the basement to the garage. If you wish to have an outlet by the canister you can purchase one through the Design Centre.

Condensation & Humidity

As a result of new and improved building practices, new homes are tighter, better sealed and better insulated. However, these improvements have the by-product of increasing the humidity in your home.

When uncontrolled, excess humidity can cause staining, rotting and mold. That's why steps should be taken to reduce the relative humidity (RH) as soon as excessive condensation occurs on inside window surfaces. (Humidity indicators are available at your local hardware store.)

To reduce excess moisture, you can control the moisture sources or increase ventilation.

Basements frequently experience condensation in the summer, which can be reduced with a dehumidifier.

Outside Air Temperature Celsius		Desirable Maximum Inside Relative Humidity (%) at an Indoor Temperature of 21 °C (70F)
Celcius	Fahrenheit	
-24	-10	25%
-18	0	30%
-12	10	35%
-7	20	40%
0	32	45%

The following steps will help control the levels of humidity:

- Make sure you use your Energy Recovery Ventilation (ERV) system; you may need to keep turning it up until the humidity subsides
- Turn on additional exhaust fans (in the master ensuite, powder room, kitchen, etc.) and always have them on when cooking, bathing or washing
- Turn furnace fan control on thermostat to the "on" position to promote internal air circulation throughout the house
- Leave the window slightly open to allow fresh, cooler air into your home
- Open all drapes, blinds and curtains to encourage air circulation and reduce condensation. Do not keep blinds and heavy drapery over the windows during the day

Countertops

To ensure long-lasting beautiful countertops, please follow these tips:

- Avoid a concentration of water or wet cloths at or near the junction of the countertop and backsplash as well as miter joints
- Do not leave standing water on countertops and joints
- Do not place hot pans or activated electrical appliances directly on surfaces
- Avoid abrasive cleaners or steel wool
- Do not leave common household bleach on the surface
- Do not use the surface as a cutting board
- Clean with a damp soapy cloth or a household solvent, rinsing thoroughly with water
- Polish occasionally with glass wax or liquid car polish to mask superficial scratches

For granite/marble/Corian countertops:

- Simply use a mild household detergent and water to clean the surface
- Never leave anything acidic on the surface as it could cause damage
- Never use an abrasive cleaner as it may scratch or damage the polished surface
- To avoid cracking or damage, do not use as a stand-on platform or working platform

Damaged countertops not noted on the PDI form are excluded from the statutory warranty.

Drains

Each plumbing fixture in your home has a "J"-shaped drain trap designed to provide a water barrier between your home and sewer gas. The trap holds water, which prevents airborne bacteria and odours from entering your home. These traps can become clogged, with grease and loose hair build-ups being the most common reasons.

- Use a plunger to build pressure in the pipe and thus force materials causing the clog to dissipate and drain out the trap
- If this fails, you can also use a drain de-clogger such as Liquid Plumber and follow the instructions. (Never pour grease into a drain or toilet as this will cause stopped-up drains)

Dryer Exhaust

Dryer exhaust ducting should be checked and cleaned periodically to avoid any possible lint build-up or blockage. When checking an exhaust fan, look for a strong airflow. The dryer exhaust vent on the outside of your home should not be blocked or covered by snow.

Due to the temperature of the air that comes out of the exhaust, we do not recommend you plant any form of shrubs or plants in front of the vent.

Drywall

It's normal for slight cracking, nail pops or seams to become visible in walls and ceilings over time due to shrinkage of the wood and settling of the home. These are not indicative of any structural problems, so they are not covered by the Tarion warranty.

Electrical

The electrical components of your home are all CSA-approved, professionally installed and inspected by the local Ontario Hydro inspection department. The wiring meets the Health and Safety standards of the Ontario Building Code and Ontario Hydro. It's also suited for standard household electrical appliances.

We recommend you familiarize yourself with the location of the breaker panel, as it includes a main shut OFF that controls all the electrical power to the home.

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 back on. Switching the breaker directly from tripped to on will not restore service.

Individual breakers control separate circuits. Each breaker is marked to help you identify which breaker is connected to which major appliances, outlets or other services. Should a failure occur in any part of your home, always check the breakers in the main panel box.

Circuit breakers protect electrical wiring from overloading. Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blown fuses could result from faulty appliances and should be investigated.

Arc-default breakers are found in bedrooms. They help protect your home against faulty cords of light fixtures and electronic equipment.

Breaker Tripping

Breakers trip due to overloads caused by plugging too many appliances into the circuit, a worn cord or defective appliance, or operating an appliance with too high voltage requirement for the circuit. The starting of an electric motor can also trip the breaker.

Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV)

When running your ERV, select the intermittent mode (green) on the control panel located by your thermostat if you'll be away for a few days, or if you find the inside air too dry during heating season or too humid during cooling season. In this mode, the unit turns itself off for 40 minutes every hour and ventilates at minimum speed for the remaining 20 minutes.

Yellow sets the minimum speed for normal daily operation (for a family of 4 depending on showers and cooking practices), while red is maximum speed for excess pollutants.

Usually, construction continues to happen close to newly occupied homes.

To make sure your filter is clean, check it every month, as well as the furnace filters. If they are dirty:

- Turn off unit using remote, then unplug
- Unlatch the door and open it. Clean the inner side of the door with a damp cloth, then wipe with a dry one. Disengage the door from its hinge by sliding it from left to right and set it aside
- Lift both foam filter brackets and remove the foam filters from the core. While holding the core, rotate the two core retainers and slide the core out from the unit
- Clean the inside walls of the unit with a clean damp cloth, then wipe with a clean dry one
- Wash the two core filters under hot water with mild soap. Rinse thoroughly and let dry completely before reinstalling on the core. (You can also vacuum the filters with a shop vac)
- Remove the dust on the core using a vacuum cleaner and a soft brush attachment
- Slide the core in the unit. Secure the core by rotating both core retainers to their initial position
- Reinstall both foam filters and secure them to the core by pulling down the two foam filter brackets. Reinstall the door
- Close the door and plug the unit back in
- Once construction in your area has settled, you can proceed with cleaning the filters semi-annually
- If your unit is a rental, contact the same service provider as your hot water tank for further assistance

Faucets

Wipe faucets as needed with a soft, damp cloth and use only warm water to remove dry water spots. Do not use cleaners that contain abrasives or harsh chemicals, as this will only damage the finish and void the warranty. Some faucets may in time require that the cartridge be changed. Most manufactures will ship one to your home.

Filters/Ventilation

Ventilation is very important to your health and safety. The following tips will help:

- Run your hood fan when cooking and bath fans when bathing or using the facilities
- Avoid covering or interfering in any way with the fresh air supply to your furnace
- Air your house out by opening windows

Your Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system has an air filter that helps keep the air clean by reducing the flow of dust into the air handler unit and consequently into the air. There are two potential locations for air filters: at the return air and at the handler.

Clogged filters can cause a unit to malfunction. For maximum efficiency, this filter should be replaced or cleaned monthly.

Before changing filters, remember to shut off the power to the air handler and restore power when finished.

Please note that the thermal transfer coil for air conditioners and heat pumps, located adjacent to the air handler unit, can also lose efficiency with the build-up of dust.

Fireplace

Using your fireplace in the safest, most efficient way possible entails reading the manufacturer's literature provided to you.

Natural Gas Fireplace

When your fireplace is initially lit, the curing of metal parts will cause a peculiar odour. This is normal and will diminish after about eight hours of burning time. It's also normal for the glass to fog up the first few times you use the fireplace. Please keep this area well ventilated.

Glass doors can be removed, providing access to clean the glass and re-arrange the logs. To do this, loosen the two screws at either end of the grill. Two larger screws will be visible at the top of the glass; remove them to allow the glass to tilt out approximately 30 degrees. The glass can be removed entirely by pulling upwards while in the tilted position.

A soft cloth with clear water may be used to wipe the fireplace glass. Glass cleaner and similar cleaning products should not be used on tempered glass as they

may cause damage. Caution should be exercised when using combustible cleaning products near an illuminated pilot light.

Electric Fireplace

Electric fireplaces are among the safest varieties to have in your home, but they still require care and maintenance for proper functioning. The unit should be inspected regularly to make sure that the thermostat is working properly and that the inside of the unit is clean.

The following tips will allow you to enjoy a warm, cozy fire in a clean, safe fireplace:

- Although you do not have to clean an electric fireplace like you would a chimney fireplace, you will want to clean inside and out with a soft, dry cloth to remove dust and other particles that may create fire hazards
- Some electric fireplaces also have light bulbs. These need to be changed every 2-3 years
- Fireplaces should not be used as furnaces. Use a fireplace for a short-duration fire (no longer than five hours)
- Flammable objects need to be removed from the area surrounding the electric fireplace
- Avoid placing your electric fireplace near a water source. Fish tanks, water heaters and sinks are particularly dangerous

If you maintain your electrical fireplace accordingly, you will enjoy many years of ambient lighting and clean heat.

Floors (Carpet, Ceramic, Concrete, Hardwood & Laminate)

Carpet

The most important thing you can do to protect your carpet is to vacuum it frequently. Vacuuming high traffic areas weekly helps keep them clean and maintains the upright position of the nap. Professional carpet cleaning should be performed at least once a year.

Wipe spills and clean stains immediately by blotting or dabbing rather than rubbing. Matting and crushing from heavy furniture is considered normal wear.

If you have a berber carpet installed in your home, you should take special care with the "beater bar" on your vacuum as it could damage your berber.

There are, however, several ways to prevent this from occurring:

- Turn the beater bar off when vacuuming your berber carpet

- If your beater bar is adjustable, set it to the highest position so it's not digging into the carpet as it spins
- Ensure the beater bar is in good condition. If it's made of plastic, it could become chipped at the edges, which will cause the loops in the carpet to be pulled
- Avoid the seams in the carpet when vacuuming
- Berber carpets can also be damaged from snagging and from dragging sharp objects like furniture and high heels. We cannot be held responsible for damage resulting from improper maintenance

Ceramic

Ceramic tiles are relatively easy to maintain using the following tips:

- Cleaning tiles regularly prevents staining. Use a damp mop to clean the tiles and avoid adding detergent/cleaners to the water. If you feel a cleaning agent is required, use warm water and a very mild dish detergent. Rinse thoroughly
- Do not use vinegar as a cleaning agent for ceramic tiles, as it will slowly destroy the glazing of the ceramic tile
- Be cautious when purchasing "tile and grout" cleaners. Many of them are simply bleach and may have the tendency to erode the colour consistency of the coloured grout
- Make sure there are no blows from a heavy object as this may cause chipping or scratching
- The joints between the tiles are waterproof as long as the grout used has not deteriorated, so you should use a grout sealer annually to treat your surroundings. To protect the grout from staining, you can apply a coat of sealer to the entire floor

If repairs are required to your ceramics or grout, slight variations between dye lots of similar materials within a specified colour or pattern are normal and acceptable as per Tarion. Slight variations in grout colour are to be expected when making repairs. If you purchased a colour grout, we recommend you use a colour-enhancing sealer over the grout for better and longer wear.

Concrete

Concrete floors are covered under warranty to be free of defects in workmanship. This includes concrete floors in the basement and garage. Hairline shrinkage cracks are non-structural and cosmetic in nature, so they're not considered to be warranty repair issues. As per Tarion, cracks in garage floor slab in excess of 6

mm are covered under year end warranty and for basement floor slab, 4mm. Painting the flooring with proper concrete floor paint helps keep dust down.

Hardwood

Hardwood is a durable flooring material. If cared for properly, it can last a lifetime. Proper care entails:

- Regularly sweeping or vacuuming dirt and grit from the floor, then cleaning it with a damp mop
- Using a mild detergent, if necessary, while avoiding harsh detergents or large quantities of water, as these may harm the finish or the wood. (Never leave water standing on your hardwood floors. Standing water is especially likely to go unnoticed under fixtures, appliances or any other areas where condensation, dripping or leaking may occur)
- Maintaining an indoor humidity level between 35 and 45 percent, which will prevent the floor from cupping. This can be achieved through the use of ventilation, air conditioning, humidification and dehumidification

Wood floors may tend to shrink somewhat in the months after construction, as the wood adjusts to the conditions of the home. Seasonal changes will also affect wood, whose natural water content will vary with the humidity in the house. The following occurrences are normal:

- Minor gaps between the boards in dry conditions (gaps of 2mm or less are not covered under warranty)
- The swelling of boards in conditions of high humidity, as well as a slightly corrugated appearance when the floor is viewed in the direction of a light source

Although your floor will adjust easily to seasonal changes in humidity, long periods of high humidity or too much direct exposure to water can seriously affect the floor.

Any hardwood damages not noted on your PDI will not be covered under warranty by Empire Communities.

Laminate

Although laminate is a durable flooring material, we still recommend you regularly sweep dirt and grit from the floor, then clean it with a damp mop. You should also avoid harsh detergents and large quantities of water, as these may harm the finish. Never leave standing water on your floor.

Floor Squeaks

Empire Communities endeavors to be very proactive during construction in an effort to minimize squeaks by nailing, screwing and sanding the floors before carpet, ceramics or hardwood are laid. But as is the case in virtually all new dwellings, a squeak-free floor may not be attainable. Squeaks resulting from normal shrinkage of materials caused by drying after construction are excluded from Tarion's statutory warranty. If a repair is deemed necessary we will attempt to fix the area once only. (Please remove furniture from the area before the repair appointment takes place.)

Extended low-humidity indoor environments can cause excessive shrinkage in the wood resulting in loose floor connections. You should maintain adequate indoor humidity levels to prevent excessive drying out of materials.

Framing

The structural lumber in your home contains moisture, some of which is absorbed during the building process.

Shrinkage will occur during the first heating season, as will drying out. This is normal and should not be a concern. As a result of this, you may notice:

- Squeaks developing in the floor underlay, wood flooring and stair treads
- Small gaps showing between stairs and stair mouldings and the walls
- Fireplace mantels shrinking slightly and separating from the wall or at joints
- Wood flooring pens between individual pieces or settling from the baseboards at walls or under door jambs/trim
- Drywall corners
- Minor joints opening in door and window trim, baseboards, walls, etc.
- Small gaps appearing between cabinets or vanities and the walls
- Thin cracks appearing in exposed wood structural members (i.e. joints and beams)

Please be assured these conditions are of a normal nature and do not adversely affect the structural integrity of your home. They can be concealed with putty, filler or latex caulking.

Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI)

The GFI is a safety feature that is mandatory for bathrooms and exterior electrical outlets. It interrupts the electrical power in the event of exposure to water, which prevents electrocution.

A GFI function may be handled by a separate breaker on the electrical panel. If your home is equipped with a whirlpool, the GFI will be a separate breaker on the electrical panel.

If the GFI is a separate breaker on the electrical panel, there will be three positions: ON, OFF and neutral. To reset a tripped breaker, move the breaker all the way to the OFF position and then all the way to the ON position.

Hot Water Tank & Furnace Heating

Your home has been equipped with a high-efficiency furnace, installed by a licensed heating contractor. Prior to occupancy, we have all heating ducts professionally cleaned to remove excess dust and dirt as well as construction debris.

The system has been professionally balanced to ensure even air distribution throughout your home. Installation of additional equipment will void the furnace warranty if installed by a contractor other than the original furnace installer. Additional equipment includes air conditioning systems, humidifiers, electronic air cleaners, thermostats, etc.

If your furnace fails to operate, check the following:

- Ensure the thermostat is set to "heat" rather than "cool"
- Is the thermostat set higher than the reading?
- Ensure your furnace filter is clean and that the breaker is turned on at the electrical panel
- Check all air intake pipes on the outside of your house to ensure there is no blockage
- Make sure the disconnect switch is not activated

To balance your heat throughout your home, adjust the dampers in the warm air ducts by removing the warm air grill in the floor and turning the damper just inside of the duct.

Heating outlets must be kept free from obstruction such as carpets, furniture, etc. Filters should be changed or cleaned at least every two months during the heating season so they do not affect the quality and quantity of airflow in your home.

Your hot water tank has a control dial to set the water temperature. The dial should be set at approximately 49°C or “normal.” Water heaters normally collect small quantities of scale. Installing a water softener will help reduce the scale build-up.

If you experience a problem with your hot water tank, please call the number noted on the tank for assistance.

Insulation

Your home has been designed with an insulation package that matches your particular set of climatic conditions. No maintenance should be required as long as your insulation is not disturbed.

Please note that the basement wrap insulation is compressed and meant to get damp due to concrete condensation. It will not mold. If you find areas that are wetter than others, cut the wrap (dehumidify) and once dry, tape with red insulation tape.

Light Bulbs

Light bulbs are not covered under the statutory warranty. To avoid discolouration of the light fixture, be careful not to exceed the manufacturer’s recommended limitations on bulb wattage when you replace light bulbs. These limitations are displayed within the fixture near the bulb receptacle.

Nail Pops

Nail pops are a result of the construction materials in a house drying and the natural settling of a house over time. If your walls have nails popping back out, or if the nail head itself is actually showing, rest assured that this is a natural occurrence. You can fix it in a day with a hammer, a putty knife and a paintbrush. (Please note it’s your responsibility to sand and paint after a nail pop repair.)

Over-the-Range Microwave

If you purchased an over-the-range microwave, the plug will be installed in the cabinet above the stove.

In some municipalities, inspectors will request that a hood range be installed. We will hardwire this fan and once you choose to install the microwave, you’ll need to have an electrician rewire to an outlet. There is no double wiring because to comply with the Ontario Building Code, we cannot leave live wires in the walls.

Plumbing

Although the plumbing system and fixtures have been installed by a professional plumber, the majority of maintenance tasks are simple enough that you can complete them without professional help:

- Shut off exterior taps in the wintertime. Failure to do so could result in the pipes freezing and broken water lines. We recommend you bleed them by opening the bleeder valves in the fall in preparation for the winter. Also, remove hoses during cold weather, even if the faucet is located in your garage. Otherwise, the water inside the hose can freeze and expand back into the pipe, causing a break in the line. Repairs would be your responsibility
- Don’t use toilets as garbage bins. The main cause of toilet clogs are domestic items such as diapers, excessive amounts of toilet paper, sanitary supplies, Q-tips, dental floss and children’s toys
- You can repair a dripping faucet by shutting off the water at the valve directly under the sink, then removing the faucet stem, changing the washer and reinstalling the faucet stem. The showerhead is repaired the same way. Replace the washer with another one of the same type and size. (Minimize the frequency of this repair by remembering not to turn the faucets off with excessive force)
- Don’t mistake condensation on water supply lines for a leaking pipe. Condensation generally occurs when there is high indoor humidity and the warm moist air in the house comes in contact with the cold water lines

Registers

You can regulate the temperature in individual rooms by adjusting the registers. The two types of registers used are:

- Air supply registers that deliver warm or cold air into the room
- Centrally located air return registers that return air back into the air handler fan to be re-heated or re-cooled

When registers and dampers are adjusted, they work with the thermostat to help maintain the temperature in your home. You can determine the amount of cool or warm air that enters a room by opening and closing the registers.

Rooms furthest away from the air handler will need to have vents opened more. These registers should never be obstructed since this will affect the temperature.

Smoke Detectors

We recommend you read over the manufacturer's manual.

Check your smoke detectors monthly to make sure they function properly. If it's battery-operated and is not working, verify that the battery isn't dead.

If it's an electric powered model, verify that the connection has not been severed or that the circuit breaker is not on.

Dust can also contribute to the smoke detector malfunctioning. Vacuum the smoke detectors to remove any excess dust.

Sump Pumps

Many of our homes include sump pumps as per Municipality requirements. These help ensure you never encounter a problem after rainwater falls on your homesite.

To maintain your sump pump, please make sure there are not any storage items left close to the pit areas.

Verify that the sump pump works by unplugging and re-plugging in the cord. The sump pump should turn on once you re-plug it in.

An outlet for the sump pump is located in the basement and connected to a Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) which is shared with all bathrooms. If the breaker trips, re-set the GFI.

Ensure that you use a shop vac to remove any debris from the pit. For your peace of mind, we also recommend that you purchase a back-up battery pack. (They can be purchased at your local hardware store.) If your doorbell does not work, this could be an indication that your sump pump and the bathroom GFI's do not have power.

Telephone & Cable Jacks

You should contact your local providers to set up phone, cable and internet service.

Thermostat

The thermostat helps keep your home's temperature even throughout. We recommend setting the thermostat between 21 to 22°C for heating and 25°C for cooling.

A common problem is that the upstairs rooms are too cold in the winter, although the ground floor is not. This happens because the thermostat is located on the ground floor, so it's the temperature on that level that determines when the furnace starts and how long it operates. The solution is to regulate the dampers on the warm air ducts for the ground floor, so that the input of heated air is directed to the second floor. Additional control of air can be achieved by removing the warm air register, reaching just inside the duct and adjusting the damper. (Beware of sharp points and edges.)

Your thermostat displays a low-battery indicator when it's time to replace the battery.

Toilets

The low-consumption toilets provided in your new home use less water, which means they do not have the same flushing capacity. If your toilet becomes clogged, check to see whether something is caught in the trap. A plunger or plumber's snake will usually resolve the problem.

Trim Work/Moulding

Shrinkage of trim work may occur, depending on temperature and humidity. Lumber is more vulnerable to shrinkage during the warmer seasons. It's important to maintain a moderate and stable temperature to help minimize the effects of shrinkage. Wood shrinkage can result in separation at joints of trim pieces. You can correct this with dap and touch-up painting.

Washrooms

Bathtubs and Showers

Acrylic tubs and showers may flex and creak. This is perfectly normal. Fibreglass and acrylic bathtubs and shower enclosures are lightweight, yet strong. Flexing or cracking sounds can often be heard, especially in large soaker tubs as they are filled and emptied. These fixtures are designed to withstand this type of flexing, so it does not generally represent a manufacturing or installation defect and may not be warranted. Damage not recorded on the PDI form is excluded from Tarion's statutory warranty.

In addition, tubs and showers require regular cleaning with a non-abrasive spray, cream-based cleaner or dishwashing liquid. Cleaners and waxes made specifically for fibreglass are available at most supermarkets and spray window cleaners are also very effective.

Never use abrasive cleaners, scrapers or metal brushes, as these will scratch and dull the surface.

Any damage not noted on the Pre-Delivery Inspection will not be guaranteed under warranty.

Sinks

Sinks are relatively indestructible unless heavy objects are dropped in them. This could cause chipping, cracking or scratching.

When cleaning your sink, use only non-abrasive cleaners and avoid steel wool pads as they will remove the finish on stainless steel sinks. Baking soda is recommended for all of these surfaces.

If your tubs and sinks are equipped with “pop-up” plugs, you should remove them at regular intervals to ensure that they are clear of hair and lint. Otherwise your sink and bathtub could drain slowly, which could eventually cause a complete blockage.

Note that maintenance of the silicone and sealants in the tub, sink and shower areas is a homeowner maintenance issue and not guaranteed under warranty due to normal shrinkage.

When filling your bathtub or sink, don't leave it unattended.

Floors

Bathroom floors are not watertight. Water flowing on bathroom floors will run to the edges along cabinets and baseboards or to the vents and will continue to flow down below.

Windows & Doors

Windows

To keep aluminum and vinyl surfaces on your windows clean, use warm, clear water. Never use powdered cleaners. Clean glass with vinegar and water or a commercial glass cleaner and apply a silicone lubricant as necessary.

Windows may feel drafty in the winter months when the outside temperature is low. This draft is often due to the vertical movement of air over the face of the window. Air near the window gets cooled then drops as hot air rises. This movement can feel like a draft.

Please note that although windows and doors are weather-stripped, they are not 100% weatherproof in extreme conditions. By design, a limited amount of air is expected to leak into the house to replace air forced out by exhaust fans and heating equipment.

All weather-stripping should be checked annually to ensure that it's reducing air leaks in winter and dust and dirt infiltration in summer. Cracked or damaged weather-stripping should be replaced. Since many types of weather-stripping are available, please ensure you get a product that's well suited for the intended use.

Other weather-stripping tips include:

- Ensuring that the seal is snug
- Keeping weather-stripping free of paint
- Lubricating rubber or vinyl products with petroleum jelly to keep them pliable

Caulking must be inspected annually since it may shrink, crack or come loose over time. When re-caulking, you must first scrape out the old caulking and use a caulking gun to apply a new coat.

Doors

All doors are exposed to a variety of climatic conditions. This means they may be subject to warping and shrinkage. Please ensure that all weather-stripping and caulking is maintained regularly.

To maintain smooth operation and prevent damage to the door frame, try to keep the patio door tracks clean at all times. Do not slam doors; keep them closed as much as possible. Lubricating wheels, rollers and other moving window and door parts should be done on a yearly basis using a silicone spray.

Condensation or frost may occur on the interior of window surfaces and is not warranted by Tarion. It's your responsibility to maintain interior humidity levels by controlled dehumidification, ventilation or air conditioning. Interior air moving over the windows can help control condensation. Please note that heavy draperies or window coverings that block heat diffusers can prevent air flow. Running the furnace fan and ERV continuously can also help to control condensation.

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