

- ❑ **Don't fill the weep holes of a brick exterior.** Weep holes provide a way to drain any moisture that may find its way into the air space located between the building wrap of the home and the brick. Normally found at the base of the cavity, weep holes are also installed at other levels of flashing. They may be created by using a rod, pipe, natural fiber rope, or by leaving a head joint empty. Locate the weep holes of your brick exterior and make sure that they remain unobstructed.



- ❑ **Don't put batteries in backwards in smoke alarms that have battery backups.** This will prevent the device from working properly and will make it appear that the alarm is faulty. An inoperative smoke alarm not only puts your family in danger, but it can cause an unnecessary callback of the contractor.
- ❑ **Don't block the foundation vents.** The vents that are located along your foundation walls should be kept clean and clear of any object that may hinder their function. Avoid placing storage structures, dense shrubbery, or any other object close to them that can obstruct the airflow to and from your crawlspace. They are there for a reason.
- ❑ **Don't plant trees or shrubbery too close to your exterior heating and cooling units.** Planting items around the HVAC unit outside your home will obstruct its air flow and cause unnecessary wear on the equipment and decrease operating efficiency.

- ❑ **Clean your gutters.** Allowing gutters to accumulate leaves, twigs, and other debris can lead to improper drainage around the home. Make sure that the gutters and downspouts of your home remain clean. If debris obstructs the water flow of your gutter system, it may overflow in some areas. This is not only a nuisance to walk under, but it also may allow water to accumulate near the foundation. Water around the foundation may lead to increased moisture in your crawl space which increases the possibility of mold growth.



- ❑ **Follow recommended maintenance suggested by the manufacturers of products and equipment in the home.** Abiding by these guidelines will help to prolong the life of the products, keep your home in good repair, and meet warranty requirements of the manufacturers.
- ❑ **Crack a window when using a vent-less fireplace.** Use manufacturers' recommendations to make sure that you have fresh air from the outside coming into your home while using a vent-free gas fireplace. The by-products from the fireplace are emitted into the house without a vent, but cracking a window allows the air to be replenished. Your fireplace manufacturer should have specific instructions for its product's operation. A carbon monoxide detector may also be installed for added peace of mind.



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# New Homeowner Mistakes & How to Avoid Them



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# New Homeowner Mistakes & How to Avoid Them

The purchase of a home is a great achievement, and odds are your home will be the single biggest investment that you will ever make. As a new homeowner there are many things to learn about, and one of the first things you should become acquainted with is the care and maintenance of your new home. A lot of product specific information may be found in literature supplied by the manufacturer or your builder, but there are many lessons that are not so obvious. The following are common mistakes made by new homeowners.

*Please take the time to learn from their mistakes and protect your investment!*

- ❑ **Don't use the crawl space for storage.** The crawl space of a home should not be used for storage. A variety of materials can release toxic and/or flammable components that can then be transported to the living areas of the home. Especially avoid paints, gas cans, combustion engines, etc. Crawl spaces can also be very humid and can promote the growth of mold and mildew. Any items placed in this space may accumulate mold and mildew on their surfaces requiring cleaning, repair, or disposal depending upon the materials they are made of.



- ❑ **Don't grill near vinyl siding.** Because of vinyl siding's relatively low melting point, any source of extreme heat, including grills and torches, should be kept at a safe distance from the exterior of your home. Without caution, you run the risk of melting your vinyl siding or igniting the exterior of your home.



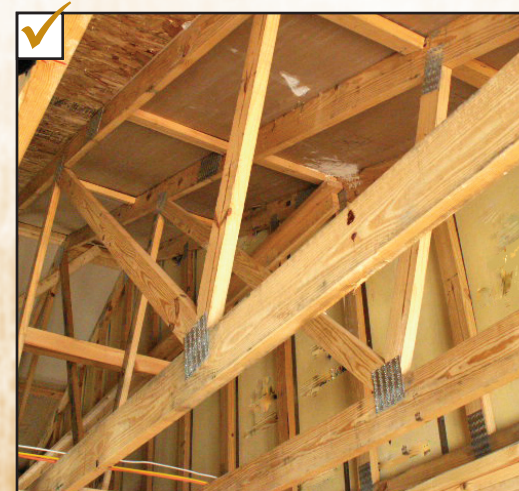
- ❑ **Avoid adding penetrations through your roof.** Sometimes equipment requires a specific location when being installed in a home. If at all possible, try to avoid fastening any object through the roof. Mounting a television satellite, antenna, or weathervane to a roof can be done successfully, but you want to be careful to follow the manufacturer's recommendations. This precaution will help prevent a potential roof leak.
- ❑ **Don't alter finished grades.** It is important to maintain the finished grade of your new home. Your home site has been designed, developed, and then inspected to promote proper water drainage. What you do to your property could negatively impact the ability of your site to shed water into an appropriate storm drainage system. Be mindful when adding landscaping to your yard.



- ❑ **Disconnect the garden hose during winter.** You should always drain and disconnect any garden hoses from exterior faucets before freezing temperatures arrive in your area. This advice also extends to homes equipped with no-freeze faucets. If a hose remains connected under freezing conditions, ice may cause a crack in the hose, faucet, or even the pipe under the house. Damage from water leaks can vary greatly, so it is best to take all necessary precautions.



- ❑ **Don't remove wood from trusses.** Trusses are structurally designed to work as systems to support and transfer the loads of your home. Do not assume that what may appear to be "extra" wood can be cut, drilled, or altered. Trusses efficiently minimize wood use by utilizing smaller pieces of lumber. Although small in appearance, they complete the engineered system. Any modification can lead to an unsafe environment, structural damage, and/or voiding of your home's structural warranty.



- ❑ **Water your new lawn.** The first couple of weeks are critical for a new lawn. During this time the lawn needs to establish itself and requires a strict watering regimen. The roots should not be allowed to dry out, and daily watering may be required to keep the lawn moist. Once the roots are established (approximately 2 weeks), watering can be less frequent but deeper. The watering requirements will change based on temperature and rainfall during this time.



- ❑ **Choose contractors carefully when having home improvements done.** You may be tempted to hire a contractor after the purchase of a new home for improvements such as fences, decks, landscaping, etc. Make sure that companies are bonded, insured, and licensed by the state of residence. Check references, compare prices, and get it in writing! One of the best resources is to ask a friend or neighbor for recommendations. This affords you an opinion from someone you know and the chance to see the contractor's work. Check with your local Better Business Bureau and never pay in full for work before the work is complete.