

## Property Home Care, Use and Preventative Information

The following information has been gathered in response to requests from residents looking for guidelines. We work hard to deliver you a clean, well-maintained and comfortable home with all the mechanical equipment operating properly. Even though you are currently renting this home, you still need to treat it as your own. Since minor home maintenance is your responsibility, we have developed these next few pages to make that responsibility as easy as possible. Proper cleaning and maintenance will keep the home and its equipment safe and usable for you. The key to proper cleaning is to do it often. Set up a weekly schedule. Monitor the work and ensure that cleaning is performed as often as needed.

### Furnace and Wall Heater Maintenance:

- All tenants are responsible for cleaning and replacing the furnace filters at least once a year, preferably at the beginning of the fall or winter. Problems caused by failure to clean or replace the filter may be the tenant's responsibility.
- Changing the Filter: To check or change the filter, take it out and hold it up to the light. If it looks clogged, replace it with a new filter of the same type and size regardless of the length of time it has been used. The size of the filter is printed on the edge of frame. An arrow on the edge of the frame indicates the correct direction of airflow through the filter. Air flows from the return-air duct toward the blower (into the furnace), so the arrow on the filter should point away from the return-air duct and toward the blower (furnace). You can usually change a filter without turning off the gas, electricity or oil supply.
- **Note:** If you notice the furnace or air-conditioning running for longer intervals but cooling or heating less effectively, your furnace filter is probably clogged.
  - *Did you know that by changing a furnace filter monthly, you can save \$20-\$25 out of every \$100 you spend on your heating bill? Not a bad investment for a \$1 filter.*
- Dust can accumulate at furnace vents as well as at fan vents. A small broom brushed across the vent opening and use of a vacuum to clear away any dust will help the furnace and fan operate efficiently.

### Drains:

- Avoid letting food, hair, and excess soap go down the drain.
- Some dishwashers will clog from food left on the dishes when put in the machine, so be sure to scrape all food off dishes into the garbage can before loading into the dishwasher.
- An excellent drain cleaning/clearing solution recipe is: 1 cup salt, 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup vinegar, followed by 8 cups of boiling water. We recommend performing this treatment monthly to avoid build-up.
- Hardware stores carry "hair catchers" to place in sink and tub drains that significantly help keep drains free of hair.

## **Garbage Disposals:**

- ALWAYS run water down the disposal while it is operating to avoid damaging the unit. Let water run long enough to grind all the material in the disposal, then let water run for 10 to 15 seconds after turning off the disposal. Learn to recognize the sound the machine makes when completely free of garbage.
- Disposals are designed for grinding up organic items only. Exceptions (items to AVOID putting in the disposal) include: banana peels, artichoke leaves, celery sticks, flower stems, coffee grounds, bones, egg shells, potato skins or large amounts of potato, pasta/rice, and any item that is particularly tough. NEVER put any of the following: paper, plastic, glass, aluminum foil or grease in the disposal. “WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!” Garbage disposals are for food items left over **after** you scrape your plate into the garbage can.
- ALWAYS be sure to check the power switch (usually under the sink), try the reset button (somewhere on the machine), and remove all contents before calling maintenance.  
**Problems caused by users are the tenant’s responsibility and expense.**
- Consider using ice cubes, lemons, or limes in the unit as means of “cleaning”. The hard ice-chips help knock down scum layers that build up below the seal, and in the grinder wheel.

## **Dishwashers:**

- Use at least once a week – seals may dry and the motor may be damaged by long periods of not being run.
- Clean the door and check the bottom of the dishwasher after each use for items that may fall from the racks. Check the perimeter of the door for food items falling from the counter.

## **Washer/Dryer Hookups:**

- When you install your washer and dryer, it is a good time to check your hoses and washers to eliminate leaks. If you are going to be absent from the property for an extended period of time, turn off the hot and cold water supply.
- Check the wall and floor monthly for evidence of a hidden leak.

## **Fireplaces:**

- Please burn only hardwoods in the fireplaces and woodstoves to minimize the buildup of creosote, etc. in the chimney. Creosote buildup is a fire hazard. We strongly suggest not to use fireplaces.

## **Plumbing Fixtures:**

- NEVER use abrasives on brass or gold fixtures. If brass needs to be polished, please use a product specifically designed for use on brass.
- It is best to wipe fixtures clean after each use.
- Many homes and apartments have low-flow toilets. We strongly recommend that you keep a plunger nearby, as low-flow toilets tend to clog or back up if too much paper, etc.

is flushed. Tenants must be prepared to plunge the toilet to clear clogs and avoid damage from overflows.

### **Water Damage:**

- Tenants must take care to avoid water damage caused by allowing water to sit on counters and floors.
- Care must be taken to ensure that shower curtains are inside the tub, and that shower doors are completely closed when taking a shower. Water on the tile floors can seep around the edges of linoleum and damage the flooring below. We recommend putting a mat, towel or rug on the floor to step on when exiting the tub or shower.
- Water can easily be splashed into the space behind the faucet in the kitchen or bath and damage the counter surface. Please be sure to keep these areas dry to prevent damage.

### **Toilets:**

In the interest of saving water, modern toilets are called “low flow” toilets. These toilets use a lot less water to flush than toilets of yesteryear. Unfortunately, because they use less water, they clog up easier than their predecessors. Therefore, it is essential that you take precautions to avoid clogging these toilets.

Observe the following:

- Use less toilet paper. Fold toilet paper into squares instead of rolling it into huge wads. The wads of toilet paper are more likely to get hung up on their way out of the house.
- Keep small items away from the toilet. Many people have cabinets or shelves over the toilet. Often small decorative items or personal hygiene items are left on the shelves. They can be knocked into a toilet and flushed down without ever knowing it, thus resulting in a clog.
- Female sanitary products and disposable diapers should NOT be flushed. They may disappear from the toilet bowl, but that’s no guarantee they will clear the sewer lines. Instead, they should be securely wrapped and placed in a trash receptacle.
- Teach children not to flush items down the toilet. Small kids love to flush toys down the toilet. Teach them that it is a no-no.

### **Plunging a Toilet:**

- If the water does not leave the bowl, do not re-flush. Although this seems like a no-brainer, a lot of people think a second flush will solve their problem.
- Give the water time to recede. Wait a few minutes before you plunge a toilet to see if the water level will go down. A lower water level means a less messy plunge.
- Fit the plunger. To work properly, your plunger has to develop a tight fit to the exit chamber of the toilet. If the fit is not tight, you will not move the clog.
- Work the plunger. Now you’re ready to push down and up on the plunger a few times. After two or three “pumps,” pop the plunger off the toilet. The clog should release itself. Repeat if necessary.

## **Cleaning Mold and Mildew:**

- Painted walls and woodwork: Use ¼ cup liquid dish detergent and 1 gallon water. To prevent streaking, begin washing at the bottom of the wall and work toward the top and wash ceiling last.
- Windows and glass: To clean glass and windows use ¼ cup vinegar diluted in 2 qts warm water.
- Disinfectant/Mildew remover: Apply water to tile and grout and scrub; wipe shower stall and curtain and rinse thoroughly.

## **Preventing Mildew:**

- Keep things clean: Keep closets, dresser drawers, basements – or any other place where mildew is likely to grow – as clean as possible. Soil on dirty articles can supply enough food for mildew to start growing when moisture and temperature are right.
- Control Moisture: Cooking, laundering, and bathing may add additional moisture to the house. If your clothes dryer is equipped with a vent, have it exhausted to the outside to remove moist air.
- Heat: Get rid of dampness by heating the house.
- Circulate the air: When the air outside is drier than that inside, ventilation allows the dry air to enter, take up excess moisture, and then be carried outside. When natural breezes are not sufficient, you can use electric fans. Furniture that is too close to walls will create poor ventilation and can cause mold. Poorly ventilated closets get damp and musty during continued wet weather, and articles stored in them are apt to mildew. Try to improve circulation by opening doors and using fans.
- Get rid of musty odors: Get rid of musty odors as soon as possible to prevent further mold growth. Usually musty odors disappear if the area is well heated and dried.

## **Ant Prevention:**

- Avoid leaving food on the counter at night. Ants invade the kitchen because they are looking for something to eat. Try to store food in the refrigerator or pantry. If you must leave food on the counter, store in sealed containers.
- Keep all countertops and work surfaces clean. Clean the floor and remove all traces of food.
- Get rid of any ants that have already invaded your kitchen. Place Terro Traps on any ant trails you find and across any entrances the ants are using. You will have to be persistent to completely get rid of an ant infestation and it may take several weeks to get results. One nest usually contains a large number of ants and you must kill all of them, not just the ones you see in your kitchen.

## **Stain Removal:**

Spills and stains are inevitable in a home. Since you are responsible for spills and stains that damage or ruin carpeting, we would like to offer some tips to help reduce the chances of that happening. Check out some of the following hints to help you better control staining.

- React immediately. To best avoid permanent staining from a spill or accident, prompt attention is essential. The longer a spot or stain remains, the more difficult it will be to remove.
- Always blot a stain instead of rubbing it. Blot up spills with clean, white, absorbent materials such as tissues, napkins, or towels. Blot frequently. Work from the outer edge of the spot toward the center to prevent spreading or rings. Once the stain is removed, always rinse the area with water and then absorb the remaining moisture with clean, white towels.
- Develop a “stain first aid kit” consisting of the following items:
  - Blotting materials consisting of white towels or absorbent napkins
  - Detergent solution which is 8 ounces of water mixed with 1 teaspoon of mild dishwashing soap such as Joy or Dawn.

Thank you for your assistance with the maintenance of your home.