



# **Homeowner's Maintenance Manual**

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# Introduction

## *Welcome to Your New Home!*

Congratulations on your brand new Sandcastle Home! Your home was built to last for generations, but it is a complex structure that requires periodic maintenance and a careful “breaking in” process. As the new owner, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the regular maintenance procedures your home requires.


This manual explains the basic components of your home and how you can expect those components to perform. It also offers general maintenance guidelines and solutions to common problems. Buying a home is one of life’s major purchases and with a little time and effort, you can maximize your investment. As homeowner, you can easily save money, maintain energy efficiency and make your home safer through regular preventative maintenance.



To quickly locate maintenance guidelines, look for this symbol  throughout the manual.

If you feel that certain types of maintenance or repairs are beyond your particular capabilities, we recommend that you call a professional, licensed contractor to perform the needed work. A list of recommended local contractors who frequently work with Sandcastle Homes is provided on the last page of this manual.

We have attempted to cover your home’s primary maintenance information, but it is not possible to address every scenario or method of maintenance in this manual. If you’re unsure of how to proceed in any situation, please refer to the manufacturer’s instructions, or contact Sandcastle Homes and/or a licensed professional.

Pay special attention to the items indicated by this symbol: . These items are especially important and you can avoid many headaches by complying with them.

This manual is not intended to replace or substitute any part of your ACES builder’s warranty, the manufacturers’ warranties or instruction manuals. If there is a discrepancy, the ACES builder’s warranty or manufacturers’ warranties will always supersede this manual.

Please note that this manual addresses various features for all of the different styles of homes Sandcastle Homes builds. Therefore, some of the features described herein may not be applicable to your home.

Thank you for choosing Sandcastle Homes,

*The Sandcastle Homes Team*

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Important  
Information



## Sandcastle Homes Warranty Service

At Sandcastle Homes, we are committed to providing excellent service before, during and after your new home purchase. Keep in mind, you will need to be available for a minimum of a 4-hour block of time to complete any warranty request.



### **Customer Service Procedures**

- Before submitting your warranty request form, please review the ACES warranty handbook given to you at closing for a clear understanding of what is considered a warranty item and what it not considered a warranty item.
- All warranty requests must be submitted in writing. **Please do not just email your superintendent.** By submitting in writing, this allows us to keep a historical record of warranty requests, which helps us improve our future work. You may submit your warranty request through the online form on our website: [www.SandcastleHouston.com](http://www.SandcastleHouston.com). Submitting your written warranty form begins the warranty process.
- If you have an emergency, please email your superintendent in addition to sending the written request. If the emergency occurs outside of business hours, please directly call the appropriate contractor. A phone list of contractors is on the last page of manual.
- After receiving your written warranty request, it is always our goal to contact you within eight business hours and then complete your warranty work as quickly as possible. Warranty service is conducted Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. We request that you be home for scheduled repairs. Please allow two to five days for the work on your home to be completed, as many of our contractors need at least 48-hours notice for a service call, and some repairs require more than one contractor. Most repairs will take a single day, but some repairs could take multiple days.

## Utility Changeover



All utility service accounts should be transferred to your name by the day of closing on your new home. You are responsible for setting up new electric, gas and water service accounts in your name by the day of closing. To transfer electricity, simply choose an electric provider and set up an account for your home. Visit [www.PowerToChoose.com](http://www.PowerToChoose.com) to see your electric provider options. For gas, call CenterPoint Energy (713-659-2111) to set up a new account in your name. For water, call the City of Houston (713-371-1400). When calling these providers, use the phrase "move in" instead and/or "transfer" instead of calling it "new service." Sandcastle Homes will not pay utility services on your home after it is closed. Failure to transfer your utilities may result in the provider shutting off service.

## Post Box Key

Take a copy of your bill, closing document or something showing proof of ownership to your local post office. They will then give you the key to access your mail box . Sandcastle Homes does not have these keys and cannot give them to your by law. You must go through the post office.

## Property Taxes



**Paying Your Property Taxes:** You are responsible for obtaining and paying your property tax statements and transferring your property tax bill into your name. At closing, Sandcastle Homes will prorate your property taxes for the current year using the best estimate available to the title company. Sandcastle Homes' estimated share of your property tax bill will be credited against your closing costs.

Property tax bills are typically issued by the Harris County Tax Assessor in November with payment due on January 31. **It is your responsibility to obtain your property tax bill and pay it by January 31. Penalties and interest will be assessed if your bill is not paid by January 31.** Contact Harris County Tax Assessor if you do not receive your property tax bill or you can search online at [www.hctax.net](http://www.hctax.net).

When you receive your first property tax bill, send a copy to Angela Vera, Controller, for Sandcastle Homes. Angela will then audit your property tax bill to make sure that Sandcastle Homes paid the correct amount at closing. If Sandcastle Homes owes you money, Angela will send a check directly to you along with a copy of her audit.



If you are closing in late November or December and the property tax bill is already available, you and Sandcastle Homes will each pay your correct share of the bill directly to the Tax Assessor at closing.

Remember, it is your responsibility to change your property tax bill into your name. In new construction, it is common for multiple new homes to be listed on one tax account. If you're in this situation, it is your responsibility to submit the Request to Correct Name or Address on a Real Property Account form to Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) to set up the tax account for your individual lot. All property tax forms are available on HCAD's website: [www.hcad.org](http://www.hcad.org).

**Protesting Your Property Taxes:** As a courtesy, Sandcastle Homes will protest your property tax value for the tax year in which you purchased your home. If you close before the Notice of Value is sent out, please send a copy to Angela Vera, Controller, for Sandcastle Homes, as soon as you receive it. Getting the HCAD value decreased will potentially save a significant amount of money on your taxes at the end of the year. The HCAD appraised value has no effect on the market or resale value of your home. It is simply the number that is used to calculate your taxes at the end of the year and consequently it is desirable for that number to be as low as possible.

# Maintenance Checklists







## Move-in Checklist

- ☐ By the day of closing, call all utility service providers (including, electric, gas and water) to place service accounts in your name. See instructions on page 8 of this manual.
- ☐ Attach floor protectors under furniture legs to protect floor finishes.
- ☐ Complete the HVAC registrations. The manufacturer's warranty on your HVAC requires you to register within 60 days of closing to receive the extended warranty.
- ☐ Read the manufacturers' instruction manuals for all appliances before first use.
- ☐ Test all appliances. Run your washer for the first time without clothes to clear the line of any debris and check for connecting hoses leaks.
- ☐ Drain a few gallons of water before connecting any ice makers.
- ☐ Purchase a general purpose fire extinguisher for each floor of your home and one extinguisher specifically for the kitchen. Demonstrate proper usage to all household members in case of an emergency.
- ☐ Keep first aid materials in an accessible location.
- ☐ Locate the main circuit breaker in the electric panel box and show all household members how to turn it off in case of an emergency.
- ☐ Locate the main water line shut-off valve and all individual plumbing fixture valves and show all household members how to close them in case of a plumbing emergency.
- ☐ Locate the natural gas shut-off valve by the gas meter and show all household members how to close it in case of an emergency. Keep in mind if you shut off the gas that your water heater pilot light will be to be re-lit.
- ☐ If you live in a gated community, take proof of ownership (closing documents) to your local post office to obtain your mailbox key.
- ☐ If you do not live in a gated community, purchase and install a mailbox in accordance with U. S. Postal Service Residential Mailbox Standards: [www.usps.com/receive/mailboxstandards.htm](http://www.usps.com/receive/mailboxstandards.htm).
- ☐ File an Application for Residential Homestead Exemption and Request to Correct Name or Address on a Real Property Account with the Harris County Appraisal District: [www.hcad.org](http://www.hcad.org).
- ☐ If you use a cleaning service, be sure they are familiar with the maintenance guidelines within this manual and know what types of cleaning products to use on the various surfaces in your home.
- ☐ Get to know your neighbors!



## Every Month Checklist

- ☐ Replace air filters. This is especially important during the first year and when active new construction is occurring nearby.
- ☐ Vacuum air supply and air return registers to remove dust and lint.
- ☐ Run both hot and cold water in any bathrooms that are not frequently used by running the sink, showers and bathtubs for a few minutes and flushing the toilets.
- ☐ Water new trees according to the Maintenance Guidelines in the Landscaping section.
- ☐ Check moisture at the foundation. If the dirt is pulling away, water the foundation. Do not let the yard around your foundation go more than 30 days without moisture. If it doesn't rain, lightly and evenly water the yard around your foundation.

## Every Six Months Checklist

- ☐ Check pipes and drains for water leakage. Check underneath sinks and around plumbing fixtures.
- ☐ Pour one cup of bleach down sink drains and shower drains to break up potential drain clogs and to keep smelling fresh.
- ☐ Ensure that fire extinguishers are fully charged.
- ☐ Test smoke detectors and change batteries as needed.
- ☐ Using a funnel, pour half a gallon of bleach down the HVAC drain line in the attic.
- ☐ Remove wire racks and run the self-clean feature on the oven.
- ☐ Clean or replace the vent hood fan filter as necessary.
- ☐ Lubricate moving parts of the garage door with a sprayed silicone lubricant.
- ☐ Visually inspect roof from the ground for broken or missing shingles and gaps in flashing. Call a professional to make repairs as needed.
- ☐ Clean out gutters and downspouts as needed.
- ☐ Prune shrubs and trees as needed and fertilize grass and plants.
- ☐ Make sure that at least three to four inches of foundation are visible above the ground around the entire perimeter of your home, especially near landscaped areas.
- ☐ Walk perimeter of your foundation, checking for mounded dirt piles, which may indicate the presence of destructive or hazardous insects, such as termites.
- ☐ Have preventative pest control services performed.
- ☐ Feed your stained front door with a spray furniture cleaner like liquid gold or Pledge to keep the moisture in the finish and a fresh look.
- ☐ After your first year, contact the installation company to inspect the HVAC system twice a year.
- ☐ Repair any grout cracks in wet areas, like around your bathtubs and showers. Repair any caulk cracks in wet areas with 100% silicone caulk.
- ☐ Clean garbage disposal blades by grinding up 2 trays of ice cubes. Freshen with baking soda and by grinding up citrus fruit rinds.
- ☐ Clean out yard drains and catch basins to remove any leaves or debris. Ensure that drainage swales are clear and downspouts are secure.
- ☐ Replace fresh air filter
- ☐ Treat AC unit area for fire ants.
- ☐ Disconnect hose from dryer at dryer vent and remove any lint inside the clothes dryer hose.



## Annual Checklist

- ☐ Replace frayed or split electrical extension and appliance cords as necessary.
- ☐ Tighten and adjust cabinet drawers and hinges as necessary.
- ☐ Repair cracks or separations in interior and exterior caulking as needed. Check around sinks, bathtubs, toilets, faucets, counter tops, back splashes, tile walls, tile floors, window sills and doors. Use 100% silicone caulk in wet areas.
- ☐ Check inside attic for signs of roof leaks and call a professional if leaks are found.
- ☐ Drain water heater in the attic by securing a garden hose to the water heater valve, running the other end of the hose to the nearest bathtub or window and draining the water heater until hot water is no longer running. Allow several hours for the water heater to heat up before having hot water again.
- ☐ Touch up exterior paint and refinish front door as necessary.
- ☐ Clean siding by spraying with a mixture of ten parts water and one part bleach to remove mildew. Be sure to wear rubber gloves and eye protection.
- ☐ Wash driveway, patio and walkways as necessary.
- ☐ Visually inspect brick and expansion joints cracks in the mortar and fill as needed. Clear debris from brick weep holes.
- ☐ Visually inspect fireplace vent and other exterior vents for nests.
- ☐ Hire a professional roofer to inspect the roof annually and after any major storms. They need to re-caulk the roof jacks and/or penetrations yearly.
- ☐ Remember to do all of the items on your Every Six Months Checklist again!

## Seasonal Checklist

- ☐ To keep the airflow balanced, adjust the air register grills or switch the ceiling fan rotation as necessary. Unbalanced airflow is often most noticeable at the beginning of winter and summer.
- ☐ Prepare for hurricane season in May by following the instructions found on the National Red Cross website: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).
- ☐ Remember to water your foundation during droughts. Your foundation should receive at least three inches of rain (or water) per month.
- ☐ Decorate safely for the holidays. Do not overload circuits or use worn extension cords.
- ☐ Recycle your Christmas tree!
- ☐ If you're turning on the heat for the first time each year, don't mistake the burnt, mechanical smell for natural gas. When the heat is turned on after a long period of non-use, you may notice a burnt smell; this is normal and will dissipate after a few hours. It is possible smoke alarms might go off briefly.
- ☐ When freezing temperatures are expected, be sure to set heat at 65 degrees minimum. Close the garage door to protect pipes, remove hoses and cover hose bibbs. If it has been several months since it was used, you may have to turn it on and off several times to get the pilot light to re-light.

# Maintenance Information



## Basic Warranty Coverage Breakdown:

Warranty can be broken down in several ways. The next section of the book gives a lot of details for all parts of your home.

### 1st Year

General workmanship items are covered for the first year (not including any cosmetic issues). Very few items are not warranted. You will be given a form to sign during your Introductory Walk detailing the few items that are not warranted. All parts in your home are covered by their manufacturer's warranty. For information on any parts in your home, please contact Sandcastle Homes and we are happy to steer you in the right direction. For example, your roof is covered for one year, but shingles are covered for 30 years.

### 2nd Year

Mechanical systems are covered for two years for installation and have varying warranties for parts. Mechanical systems include plumbing, electric and HVAC systems. During your Introductory Walk, we will give you a form including the model and serial numbers for your A/C system. We highly recommend you register your A/C system because it lengthens the warranty period. For all other systems, the manufacturers will honor your closing date to begin the date of your warranty period.

### 10 Year

Major structural and foundations defects are included for ten years from the date of your closing.

## Air Conditioning

It is best to keep your thermostat at a constant level. The less frequently you change the thermostat setting, the more comfortable you will be, the lower your utility bills will be and the less wear and tear there will be on the system. Changing settings frequently places stress on the system and expends extra energy. If your home has two air conditioning systems, both systems must be operating at the same temperature to achieve optimum performance. Having one unit off will not save energy; it actually places stress on the other unit. Setting the thermostat very low will not cool your home faster. Ceiling fans and the thermostat's fan function can also help produce a comfortable temperature.



The manufacturer's warranty on your air conditioning system requires that the original homebuyer register with the manufacturer within 60 days of closing on the home to take advantage of the extended warranty. You can complete this registration online; instructions can be found on the HVAC serial number that was on the form given to you at your introductory walk.

Before calling for service:

1. Check to see that the thermostat is properly set.
2. Check the circuit breaker in the panel box. If tripped, reset by switching the breaker all the way "off," then all the way back "on."
3. Check the electrical disconnect switch, which looks like a light switch, in the attic. See picture.
4. Check the exterior disconnect switch located outside near the condensing unit.



**Summertime Cooling Performance:** Your air conditioning system works by first removing humidity, then heat from your home. As outside temperatures rise above 90 degrees, your air conditioning will begin to run for very long periods of time. When outside temperatures rise to the mid-90s, the air conditioning may run for 15 to 20 hours per day. This is not bad; your system was actually designed to run this way because it's the most efficient method of cooling. Long run time removes more humidity.

As the temperature outside reaches 95 degrees, the temperature inside will start to exceed 75 degrees. When the temperature outside reaches 100 degrees, you can expect it to be 80 to 84 degrees inside.

Your air conditioning system was designed assuming fabric or wood window coverings would be used on all windows. Mini blinds can actually add to the heat in your home.

**Wintertime Heating Performance:** As you turn on your heat for the first time each winter, you may notice a burnt, mechanical smell. This is normal and will dissipate after a few hours as the accumulated dust burns off.



During colder months, you may notice condensation on the interior window panes. This is normal and is caused by the warm air indoors coming into contact with the cold window pane.

**Programmable Thermostat:** The programmable thermostat controls the entire heating and cooling system. To maximize energy efficiency and minimize utility bills, set the thermostat to a comfortable level, normally between 76 and 78 degrees for cooling and between 68 and 71 degrees for heating. It is best to leave the thermostat fan setting on Auto.

**Internal Humidity:** When your home is completed, the internal humidity is approximately 50 to 60 percent. The humidity level is dependent on how you program the air conditioner and how often you leave windows and doors open. Gradual drop in humidity occurs as the materials used in building your home (including wood, paint, caulk, concrete) dry out. Keeping your home at a constant temperature will keep the humidity level in your home under control and help the “drying out” process leaving less cracks and less door adjustments.

**Secondary Drain Line:** If you notice water dripping from the secondary drain line it’s a red alert that something is wrong and your air conditioning system requires professional attention. As the air conditioning system removes humidity from the air in your home, the moisture is drained through the primary drain line, which runs to the bathroom vanity sink drains. If this drain line becomes clogged or backed up, the water will begin to collect in a pan under the furnace in the attic. The secondary drain line drains from this pan to the exterior of the home. The secondary drain line comes out from the eave top window.

**Filters:** Sandcastle Homes recommends that you use the low-cost fiberglass filters and replace them every month. Pleated, high-end air filters can actually put a strain on your air conditioning system because they can restrict airflow through air returns. If you suffer from allergies, you may want to hire a professional to install an additional filter in the furnace air handler, such as a media or ultraviolet filter.

**Exhaust Fans:** It is important to run exhaust fans while showering to remove condensation from the air.

**Air Contaminants:** Smoking, grilling, burning incense, frying and most commonly, burning lead wick candles indoors may create a noticeable residue on carpet, walls, appliances and furniture. This residue is commonly known as ghosting and it can be very hard to clean. Strictly limit the time that you perform these activities indoors and always run the vent hood fan while cooking.

**Service Contract:** Sandcastle Homes encourages all of our homeowners to take advantage of the extended annual service contract that is available from the HVAC system contractor. This contract typically provides seasonal check-ups and periodic cleaning. Scheduled service will help maintain energy efficiency and may reduce system failure by preventing problems before they occur.

## Fresh air intake

Builders now make homes more and more air tight. There are now code requirements that A/C systems bring in outside air. It is best to leave that system on (see image #1).

Four times a year you should change the filters at the fresh air intake (see image #2). To change filter, slide metal cover to the side to open and access the filter.





## *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Whenever possible, keep bedroom doors at least partially open. Closed doors force your system to work harder as it tries to pump air under the door.
- Keep the area around the exterior condensing unit clear of debris, grass clippings, weeds and shrubbery.
- For cleaner air, lower utility bills and better air flow, change your air filters and vacuum air supply and air return registers once a month.
- At least twice a year, use a funnel to pour half a gallon of bleach down the HVAC drain line to kill any natural algae, which can clog the line if left untreated. The drain line is the upturned four inch piece of PVC pipe protruding from the furnace in the attic. If you have two units, you'll also have two drain lines.
- To keep the airflow balanced, adjust the air register grills or switch the ceiling fan rotation as needed. Don't try to maintain different temperatures in different rooms by completely closing the grills – this will unbalance the system and reduce efficiency.
- Once your home is two years old, have the system checked by a qualified technician twice a year. Unauthorized service, maintenance, repairs, alterations or lack of maintenance will void your warranty.
- Replace fresh air intake filter quarterly.



HVAC drain line by furnace in attic

## *Solutions to Common Air Conditioning Problems*

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Air temperature is different in some rooms or certain floors.	Air flow is unbalanced. Registers are blocked.	Adjust air registers. Clear obstructions from registers.
Reduced air flow or excessive dust on vents and registers.	Dirty air filter.	Replace air filter.
Excess water on windows.	Excess humidity in home.	Adjust thermostat. Use exhaust fans while cooking and bathing.
Burning smell when the heat is first turned on each year.	Accumulated dust on coils.	Normal. Happens once a year.
Air conditioning won't turn on.	Electrical disconnect switch shut off in the attic (switch is labeled "Furnace").	Flip switch in attic back on. It's often mistaken for the light switch when exiting the attic.
Air conditioning won't turn on.	Circuit tripped.	Check breaker box. Flip switch all the way "off" then all the way back "on."

## Appliances

The appliance manufacturers require that the homeowner call the manufacturer directly for all appliance warranty issues and questions. We ask you to submit a warranty request online so we are aware of your issue. We have left the detailed manufacturer's booklet for each of your new appliances in kitchen.

**Garbage Disposal:** Always use cold water when running the garbage disposal. Hot water softens grease, allowing it to harden in the drain system, which is a major cause of clogged drains. Always run cold water down the kitchen sink for about a minute after running the garbage disposal. Never put materials with fibers, such as corn husks, artichoke leaves or celery into the garbage disposal. Never use lye or drain-cleaning chemicals.

There are 2 switches mounted inside the cabinet under the sink. One is for the dishwasher and the other is for the disposal. If the push button on your countertop is not working, it is possible the disposal switch was accidentally flipped off. If that doesn't work, then the disposal reset button may need to be pushed. It is a red button on the underside of the disposal in a recessed area.

**Vent Hood Fan:** For the best ventilation, use the rear burners for heavy cooking. Use the vent fan whenever the cook top is in use to remove steam, smoke and cooking odors from the kitchen. To clean the vent, remove the filter and wash with soapy water.

**Gas Shut Off Valve:** The shut off valve for your gas cook top is located next to the cook top, depending on the placement of your oven. If you smell gas leaking from the cook top, shut off the gas with this valve and call a licensed professional to check the leak.



Gas shut off valve



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Remember that all manufacturers' warranties are based on time periods, not usage. Your appliances are only warranted for 1 year after closing, even if you do not use them during that time period.
- Read the manufacturers' operating manuals and test all appliances before first use. Run your washer for the first time without any clothes to clear the line of any debris and check for leaks at connections.
- Clean garbage disposal blades by grinding up ice cubes. Freshen with baking soda and by grinding up one citrus fruit rind.
- Periodically clean the vent hood filter with mild soap and hot water or run it through the dishwasher. Be sure the filter is dry before reinstalling it.
- Run the self-clean feature on the oven twice a year and remember to remove the metal racks first.
- Annually check the dryer vent for obstructions. Accumulated lint should be removed by disconnecting and then vacuuming the dryer vent.

## Attic



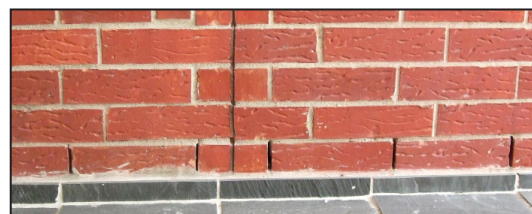
**Attic Safety:** When inspecting the attic, walk on the wood decking only. The drywall ceiling of the room below is not designed to support any weight. Disperse the weight of any items stored in the attic and do not store cardboard boxes near the furnace or water heater. Do not store flammable liquids in the attic.

## Brick



Bricks may discolor due to weathering, moisture and sun exposure. Discoloration is not warranted.

**Brick Expansion Joints:** Your home will move throughout its life due to the expansion and contraction of the soils below the foundation. Expansion joints are the vertical lines cut into the brick and filled with brick caulk. As your home moves, the expansion joints allow the brick to move too, limiting settlement cracks in the brick.



Brick expansion Joint (tall, dark vertical line) and weep holes (short, dark vertical lines)

**Brick Weep Holes:** These are the holes or slots you'll see along the bottom course of brick and above some windows and doors. The weep holes allow accumulated moisture to escape. Do not fill these holes or allow landscaping to cover them.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Be sure that your landscaping does not cover the brick weep holes.
- Once a year, check expansion joints and re-caulk with brick caulk as needed.
- Once a year, check for cracks in the mortar and fill as needed.

## Cabinets

Your new home has custom cabinets, selected for their appearance, durability and quality of craftsmanship. Small imperfections are acceptable, but great care is taken to be sure the cabinets meet your full operational and aesthetic expectations. It is important to always treat your cabinets with the same care as fine furniture. Proper maintenance will help your cabinets retain their appearance and functionality for many years. Cabinets are warranted during the 1st year for operation, not cosmetics.

Slight variations in the tone, grain and color of your wood cabinets are normal and reflect the natural characteristics of real wood. Painted cabinets have been sprayed and paint touch ups, especially brush strokes, can be visible. Enamel paint touch ups have a high luster and can take weeks to match the original paint.





### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Clean cabinets with mild soap and water, using a damp cloth.
- Always immediately dry off any water splashed onto your cabinets, especially painted cabinets.
- Be sure to position coffee makers out from underneath upper cabinets, since the rising steam can damage wood cabinets.
- Once a year, tighten and adjust cabinet drawers and hinges as needed. Apply a silicone spray to the guides of any sticking drawers.

## Carpet

Your new carpet will last for many years if cared for properly. Carpet wears out because of foot traffic and dirt that gets trampled deep into the carpet, beyond the reach of a vacuum cleaner. The most important thing you can do to maintain your new carpet is vacuum frequently.

**Buckling and Rippling:** High humidity may cause rippling or buckling, but this usually disappears with dry weather. High volumes of foot traffic may also cause carpet buckling. Upon request, Sandcastle Homes will re-stretch your carpet one time during your first year in your new home.

**Discoloration:** All carpet coloring will eventually fade some due to sunlight and air quality. Draw drapes, vacuum regularly and change your air filters every month to slow color fading.

**Shedding:** New carpet will often shed for months. This is normal and happens because loose fibers become curled into the carpet pile and do not surface until the carpet is vacuumed.

**Visible Seams and Transitions:** Most carpet comes in 12-foot widths so carpet seams are inevitable in most rooms. No seam will be completely invisible. Carpet seams are most noticeable in dense carpets with consistent texture, especially Berber. Excessive manipulating and stretching of Berber carpet can actually make the appearance worse. Transition areas where Berber carpet meets other surfaces, such as tile, can also be very noticeable. At times there may be areas where the backing of the carpet can be seen. This is called grinning and is very common.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Use a vacuum with a beater-bar that will raise the pile and more effectively remove dirt. Move furniture at least an inch or two when vacuuming to avoid carpet crushing.
- Immediately clean any spills to avoid staining. Your carpet may be stain resistant, but no carpet is completely stain proof. Always blot the spill; never rub, scrub or brush.
- If long yarns rise above the surface of the carpet or loops of Berber carpet are pulled, cut them off at pile level. Do not attempt to pull them out.
- Rearrange your furniture periodically to avoid permanent crushing of the carpet and change traffic patterns, allowing the carpet to wear more evenly.

## Ceramic Tile

**Cracks in Tile:** Like many other items in your home, ceramic tile and grout will expand and contract naturally due to changes in temperature and humidity. You can minimize this expansion and contraction by making sure there is adequate ventilation whenever the room is in use; for example, always run the bathroom exhaust fan while showering. Sandcastle Homes will repair ceramic tile cracks due to settlement during your first year in your new home. Ceramic tiles can crack or chip from a sharp blow or placement of very heavy items. Broken tiles caused by anything other than normal settlement are not warranted.



**Extra Tile in Attic:** If available, we have placed any extra tiles from installation in your attic. It is very important to not use these extra tiles for anything other than repairs. These tiles are exact matches for the tile in your home. If you replace a damaged tile with a new tile of the same color, the color will very likely be “off” because even the same color tiles from the same manufacturer will vary slightly by dye lot.



**Grout:** Sandcastle Homes will repair any cracking in the grout during your first year in your new home. Cracked grout, especially in the shower, should be repaired as soon as possible to prevent water damage to your home. Steam Cleaning is not recommended on tile because it forces moisture under the tiles and will not dry out. Steam cleaning also can encourage grout cracks.

The grout in your home is not sealed. Sealing may help prevent specific stains, but it will not prevent grout darkening over time. Grout is very porous and will collect dirt in the crevices. If you choose to seal your grout it will need to be maintained every year.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Do not use colored scrub pads; they will cause the grout to turn the color of the scrub pad.
- Monitor caulk in all wet areas and repair any cracks with a 100% silicone caulk; it's more expensive, but worth it! Do not use caulk simply labeled as “tub and tile” if it's not 100% silicone. Check and repair grout in wet areas.
- If you decided to seal your grout after closing, re-seal once a year.

## Countertops



Never use Windex, 409 or any cleaner that contains ammonia or bleach on granite because it will dissolve the seal. Be careful when cleaning the mirrors in the bathroom that the window cleaner doesn't drip down onto the granite. Never use acetone on cultured marble countertops. If you use a cleaning service, be sure they know what types of cleaning products are safe to use on your countertops.

Granite is a natural stone and therefore is not warranted. It is extremely hard and durable, but we recommend that you take precautions to protect your investment. The granite countertops in your home are sealed with a moisture-resistant protective coating, but even sealed granite can still absorb sitting moisture. Please take care and do not allow water or any other type of liquid or moisture to sit on your granite countertops. Reseal granite periodically especially if it is a light color.

Quartz is not sealed but it is still not good to use harsh cleaners like bleach, drain or oven cleaners. It is best to use quartz approved cleaner and/or mild soap and water.

Do not sit or stand on countertops. Do not place hot dishes directly on granite as extreme temperatures may cause cracking. Use a cutting board regularly. Any chips, gouges, scratches and cracks in countertops are not warranted.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Wipe up wet spills immediately, especially acidic liquid spills. Use mild soap and water to clean countertops. Never use a cleaner that contains ammonia, bleach or harsh chemicals on countertops.
- Reseal your granite when it comes into contact with a harsh chemical cleaner, like Windex or 409, which will dissolve the granite seal.
- Be sure your home cleaning service knows which cleaning products are safe to use on your countertops.

## Doors

Slamming doors can damage door jambs and cause cracks in walls. If children hang on doorknobs and swing on doors, it will cause the door to sag and the hardware to bend or break.

**Sticking Doors:** Door frames expand and contract with changes in temperature and humidity. If a door is sticking, in most cases it's due to seasonal heat and humidity and the sticking will tend to correct itself without any adjustment.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- As your home settles, if the door begins to rub, adjust the threshold or tighten the hinge screws.
- If a door locks sticks, use graphite to lubricate it. Avoid oil, as it will gum up.
- Apply an oil-type wood protectant regularly to nourish your stained front door to protect it from weathering.



## Electrical System

The electrical system in your home is designed for safe, trouble-free service and meets both local and national electrical code requirements.



Any alteration or modification to the original electrical system will void all applicable warranties. Should you require an electrician during your first two years of home ownership, you must use the electrician that Sandcastle Homes originally contracted as using anyone else could void the electrical warranty. Sandcastle Homes' electrician is on the Phone List on last page of this manual. Never allow anyone other than a licensed electrician to repair or alter your home's wiring or electrical system.

**Circuit Tripping:** Circuit tripping is commonly caused by overloaded circuits when too many electrical devices plugged in and running on one circuit. For example, the electrical current in your secondary bedrooms is not enough to run a full-service home office with many electronics plugged in at once. To reduce the load, unplug the electrical devices that may have caused the overload; then reset the breaker. If you need to install an appliance that requires a large electrical load, such as a second refrigerator, you may need a licensed electrical contractor to add additional wiring to accommodate the load.

**Circuit Breakers:** The electrical system in your home is protected by circuit breakers located in the main electrical panel. If the electricity in your home goes out, the most likely cause is an overload in the system caused by too many electrical devices plugged in and running on one circuit. When an overload occurs, the circuit breakers will shut off the flow of electricity to protect the wiring. Before resetting the breaker, attempt to locate the cause of failure or overload. If you have a complete failure and are unable to restore power, please contact your retail electric provider.



To reset the breaker, first move the breaker all the way into the "off" position; then wait a few seconds before flipping back into the "on" position.



**Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters:** GFCI electrical outlets help prevent electrical shock. They are installed in kitchens, bathrooms, garages and exterior areas where water may be present. All exterior plugs are controlled with the GFCI located in the garage. GFCI outlets are sensitive to power surges and interrupt power under certain conditions to prevent injury. To reset a GFCI outlet, press the reset button on the face of the outlet.

Do not plug a refrigerator or freezer into a GFCI controlled outlet. All outlets in the garage are GFCI controlled. If the GFCI trips, your food will most likely be ruined before you notice the problem. Do not plug large appliances, power tools or sprinkler systems into a GFCI outlet. Small surges in electrical current caused by these appliances can also cause the GFCI to trip.

**Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter:** The AFCI can sense when an arc or short circuit is about to spark and quickly interrupt the circuit. Arc Breakers are installed as a fire safety precaution required by the City of Houston Building Code.



If an Arc Breaker trips, reset the breaker by first moving the breaker all the way into “off” position, then back into the “on” position. Simply moving the breaker from the middle to the “on” position will not reset the arc breaker.



All 110 plugs are installed with Tamper Resistant outlets. When plugging into an outlet be sure to insert plug perpendicular to the outlet and apply even force. It can take some practice and time getting used to using.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Do not overload electrical circuits by plugging too many electrical devices into one circuit.
- Do not plug large appliances, large power tools or sprinkler systems into a GFCI outlet.
- If a breaker trips, reset it by first moving the breaker all the way into the “off” position before moving it back to the “on” position.
- Once a year replace any frayed or split extension and appliance cords.
- Replace surge protectors every two to three years. All televisions and computers should be plugged into AFCI safe surge protectors.

### *Solutions to Common Electrical Problems*

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
No power to an outlet in a kitchen or bathroom.	GFCI has been tripped.	Locate the GFCI and reset it.
No power to an exterior outlet or garage outlet.	GFCI has been tripped.	Locate the GFCI outlet in the garage and reset it.
No power in an area other than the kitchen, bathrooms, garage or exterior.	ARC breaker has been tripped.	Go to the breaker box, locate the tripped ARC breaker and flip it all the way “off,” then all the way back “on.”
ARC breaker trips often.	Overloaded circuit.	Plug fewer electrical devices into that circuit.

## Fireplace



Never open the fireplace glass front; this could release carbon dioxide into your home. The direct vent fireplace burns natural gas only. It comes with standard gas logs and a remote left in the kitchen drawer before closing. Due to the design of direct vent fireplaces, the surrounding materials, including the mantel, granite surround and exterior vent box, will become hot while the fireplace is in use and will retain heat for at least an hour after the fireplace has been turned off. Please be careful and do not touch these surfaces during the operation of the fireplace and for at least an hour after use. Never attempt to burn wood or wood products in the direct vent fireplace.

**Fireplace Ignition:** A slight delay between pushing the “on” button and the flame ignition is normal. If you have not used the fireplace recently, the gas line may need to prime first. If the fireplace doesn’t ignite after turning the switch “on,” wait a few minutes and try again. It’s normal to repeat this several times if the fireplace has not been used in several months. You do not need to shut off the gas at the fireplace with the key unless you suspect a leak. The fireplace has an automatic start, so no pilot light is left burning.

## Flatwork

Your driveway was not designed to hold the extreme weight of dual-axle and dual-wheel vehicles, such as moving vans or dump trucks. Do not permit these vehicles to drive on your driveway.

**Concrete Cracks:** In most cases flatwork concrete cracks (porches, patios, walkways and driveways) are due to the expansion and contraction of the underlying soils because of temperature and humidity. These cracks are normal and are not warranted. They are usually cosmetic in nature and do not affect the structural integrity of the concrete. Any attempt to repair chips or cracks in the concrete will result in product and color variation. During your first year in your new home, if the flatwork cracking appears to exceed ½ “ displacement, please contact Sandcastle Homes to inspect the crack. Pitting, staining, graffiti or other cosmetic issues are not warranted.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Special cleaners that remove grease on concrete floors are available at hardware stores.
- Once a year, wash your driveway, patio, porch and walkways.

## Foundation

Your new home has either a post-tension foundation or a structural foundation. The Gulf Coast region has highly expansive soils, meaning that the soils beneath the foundation will expand and contract with moisture changes in the ground. Your foundation was designed to move with the typical soil

movements of the Gulf Coast area to avoid cracks in the foundation, but hairline “curing cracks” will still appear and are not considered a defect. It is important that you maintain consistent moisture around the foundation. The yard area surrounding your foundation (approximately a three to six foot radius, including the space between the garage and driveway) should remain at a relatively constant moisture level throughout the year, receiving at least three inches of rain (or water) every month.

Never drill or cut into any part of the foundation, including the garage areas. Highly tensioned steel cables are installed in the foundation and drilling or cutting may cause personal injury and damage to your home. Never attach any other structure, such as a deck or patio, to your foundation, as you could compromise its structural integrity.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Do not allow the yard area around the foundation to go more than 30 days without watering. Lightly water around the entire perimeter of your foundation, being careful to provide consistent moisture.
- Make sure approximately three to four inches of the foundation are visible above the ground to help prevent moisture penetration and insect infiltration.
- Check the perimeter of your home regularly for insects. Mud or mounded dirt piles on the edge of the foundation may indicate destructive or hazardous insects, such as termites.

## Garage Door



Your garage door comes with two automatic openers, left in a kitchen drawer before closing. The garage door can also be operated manually by pulling the release cord and then lifting the garage door open. The garage door motor is protected by GFCI, so if it's not working, try resetting the GFCI outlet in the garage. Overhead garage doors cannot be completely air tight and some daylight will be visible around the edges. Severe weather may cause some precipitation to enter around the door.

**Garage Door Sensors:** The garage door's safety is controlled by the two sensors located at the bottom of both sides of the door. If either sensor is obstructed or bumped out of alignment, the garage door will not close with the automatic opener. Sensor alignment is not warranted. Simply re-align the sensors to fix the problem. The green light indicates it is level. You can also override the sensors by holding down the garage door button (on the garage wall, not on the remote) until the door is completely closed.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Keep the area around the door sensors clear.
- If the garage door is not working automatically, check to be sure the sensors are not blocked or out of alignment and reset the GFCI outlet in the garage.
- Twice a year lubricate the moving parts of the garage door.

## Landscaping, Drainage, Grading and Fences

**Drainage Design:** Your home was graded and landscaped to allow proper drainage, as required by the City of Houston. The yard is carefully graded to direct water away from your home, off your lot through drainage swales (ditches) and into the community drainage system. After heavy rainfall, it is normal to see significant areas of standing water. This is a deliberate part of the approved drainage design; it allows water to enter the drainage system slowly. With proper drainage, you should not see any standing water 24 hours after rainfall.



You are responsible for maintaining the proper grades and swales on your lot. Drainage problems that result from alteration of the builder's grading (including excavating, filling, landscaping, installation of sprinkler systems and erosion) are not warranted. Properly maintaining your landscaping and grading will help with drainage and will help prevent dry rot and termites as well. If rainwater is allowed to sit at the base of the home, rather than following the drainage patterns away from the home, the excess of moisture can lead to costly foundation or pest problems. You are also responsible for maintaining and cleaning yard and area drains, catch basins, gutter extensions, drain pipes and downspouts. Failure to regularly clean drains and catch basins can produce foundation problems.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Once a month, clean out yard drains and catch basins. Be sure drainage swales are clear and downspouts are secure. Drainage is not warranted.
- Once a month check moisture at the foundation. If the dirt is pulling away, water the foundation. Keep consistent moisture levels around your foundation and do not allow water to collect against it.
- Maintain grades and drainage in your yard, including the drainage from the rear yard through the side yard, by keeping all soil and grass several inches below any siding, decking or brick. Be sure the ground slopes away from the home on all sides to allow drainage.
- Twice a year or after any major rainstorm, check and clean gutters and downspouts. Debris tends to collect after heavy storms.
- Twice year prune back trees and shrubs to ensure they are not blocking gutters, downspouts or air conditioning compressors.
- Fertilize grass and plants twice a year.



**Fences:** You can expect your wood fences to bow and flex with changes in temperature and humidity; this is normal and not warranted. Exposure to lawn fertilizers, moisture and weather conditions will cause the coating on wrought iron gates and fences to deteriorate and rust; this is normal and not warranted.

**New Trees:** Special care is needed during the first two years to be sure your new trees grow and thrive. Watering is essential throughout all seasons.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- During summer months, water new trees (less than two years old) every other day with a slow trickle from the hose until the surrounding ground is thoroughly wet.
- During cooler months, water new trees thoroughly once a week.
- Twice a year trim back tree branches and shrubs to ensure they are not in contact with the house, gutters or air conditioning compressors.

Landscaping, trees and sod are not warranted. All plant and landscaping issues should be addressed during your Introduction Walk, as no landscaping will be replaced by Sandcastle Homes.

## Mirrors



Some mirrors will have minor imperfections and this is completely normal. All defects must be reported at the time of your Introduction Walk as mirror defects are not warranted.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Do not allow water or cleaners to get behind any mirror. This can cause the silver metallic coating on the back of the mirror to deteriorate, leaving a dark gray spot on the mirror that is no longer reflective.
- Always run the exhaust fan in the bathroom while using the shower or bathtub. This pulls humidity out of the air so that it does not collect behind the mirrors.

## Moisture and Mildew

Moisture variations, including leaks, in your home can cause certain materials to expand, contract, warp or discolor. Excessive moisture, such as sitting water from leaks, can cause mildew. Do not neglect leaks! It is your responsibility to immediately contact Sandcastle Homes as soon as you notice a leak – no matter how small – during your first year in your new home. If a leak occurs during a weekend or holiday, please contact the plumber or roofer on the Phone List on the back page of this manual. If a leak occurs after your first year in your new home, contact a licensed plumber or roofer immediately.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Take action as soon as you notice a leak. During your first year in your new home, contact Sandcastle Homes immediately, otherwise contact a licensed plumber or roofer.
- Always run the exhaust fan in the bathroom while using the shower or bathtub. This pulls humidity out of the air so that moisture does not collect.
- Clean any mildew as soon as you notice it. Mildew can be gray, brown, black or even pink in color,

particularly in wet areas like the shower.

- Once a month, check caulking in wet areas, such as around the shower or bathtub and always use 100% silicone caulk – it's more expensive, but well worth it!

## Pest Control



The Gulf Coast area is highly susceptible to many insects, some of which can damage your home. Pest control is your responsibility. Sandcastle Homes highly recommends that you set up a regular pest control plan, including termite inspections. Proactively scheduling preventative pest treatments and inspections is in the best interest of your home. Any damages caused by pests are not warranted.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Watch vent covers and overhangs for bird nests and animal activity.
- Clear debris from brick weep holes regularly to prevent pest infiltration.
- Make sure approximately three to four inches of the foundation are visible above the ground so that you can easily see termite trails or signs of other destructive insects if they are present.
- Check the perimeter of your home at least twice a year for insects. Mud or mounded dirt piles on the edge of the foundation may indicate destructive or hazardous insects, such as termites.
- Every six months schedule preventative pest control. Most professionals will check your home for signs of termites during routine pest control calls.

## Plumbing and Fixtures

All of the drain lines and plumbing pipes in your new home have been tested and inspected. Performing regular plumbing maintenance and attending to small problems as soon as they occur can help you avoid bigger, costlier future problems.



Do not neglect a leak! It is your responsibility to immediately contact Sandcastle Homes as soon as you notice a leak – no matter how small – during your first year in your new home. Failure to report leaks immediately may result in extensive, non-warranted damages. If a leak occurs during a weekend or holiday, please contact the plumber or roofer on the Phone List on the last page of this manual. If a leak occurs after your first year in your new home, contact a licensed plumber immediately.

**Showers and Bathtubs:** The showers and bathtubs in your home are acrylic, porcelain or steel. Please read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for specific care instructions. In general, never use abrasive cleaners as these will scratch the finish.

**Main Water Shut-off Valve:** The main control for all of the water flow into your home is pictured in Image A. If a major plumbing problem occurs, turn off the main shut-off valve in a counterclockwise direction to prevent flooding in your home. Your main shut-off valve is usually found toward the front



of the garage on the exterior wall. Show all household members how to turn off the main valve in case of a plumbing emergency.



Image A



Image B

**Water Intake Valves:** Most plumbing fixtures have a water intake valve to shut off water to that individual fixture for minor repairs and emergencies, see image B. Toilet valves are usually behind the toilet and sink valves are usually under the sink. Show all household members how to turn off individual intake valves.

**Main Sewer Clean Out:** The location of your main sewer clean out is located somewhere in the front or back yard within the landscaping. It doesn't require periodic maintenance; but if you ever require a plumber's services, it's helpful to know the location of your main sewer clean out.

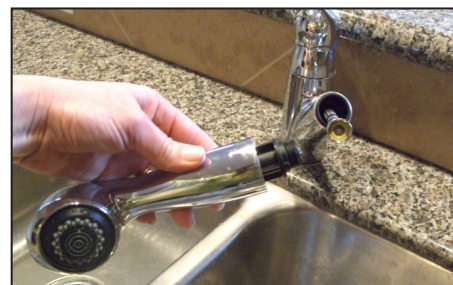


**Freezing Pipes:** If you're away during winter months, set heat at 65 degrees to prevent freezing. Keep garage doors closed to protect plumbing lines. Cover all exposed hose bibs when freezing weather is expected.

**Fixtures, Faucets and the Kitchen Sink:** All plumbing fixtures and faucets, including the kitchen sink, can be cleaned with mild, non-abrasive cleaners. Never use scouring pads, abrasive cleaners or steel wool, as these will scratch the finish and may cause staining if left sitting on the surface. Acidic leftovers, like tea bags and coffee grounds, can also cause staining if left sitting in the sink.



**Low Pressure or Dripping Faucets:** If a faucet or shower head is dripping or the water pressure is poor, the most likely cause is collected mineral deposits in the aerator, the screen screwed into the faucet spout that reduces splashing. To clean, simply unscrew the aerator and rinse it out to clear the debris from the screen. Remember the kitchen faucet has two aerators; clean both if the kitchen faucet is dripping or has poor water pressure. Clean aerators at least twice a year.





**Clogged or Slow Drains:** Sink drains can become clogged by items like grease, hair and lint. Never pour grease down any drain, as it can harden in the drain, causing it to back up. Periodically clean out drain stoppers to prevent hair clogs and periodically pour one cup of bleach down the drains to break up potential clogs.

**Toilets:** To stop continuously running water, check the float rod in the tank. Most likely, it has been lifted too high. Gently bend the float rod down to shut off the valve and stop the water from running. Be sure that the float is not touching the side of the tank. Another common cause of running water is the chain on the flush handle. Make sure it's allowing the rubber stopper to close at the bottom of the tank. Use a plunger or plumber's snake to clear a clogged toilet. Clogs caused by objects other than construction debris are not warranted.

**Garbage Disposal:** Always use cold water when running the garbage disposal. Hot water softens the grease from food waste and permits it to harden in the drain system, which is a major cause of clogged drains. Never put materials with fibers, such as corn husks, artichoke leaves or celery into the garbage disposal. Never use lye or drain-cleaning chemicals. Always run cold water down the kitchen sink for about a minute after running the garbage disposal. If it stops working, press the red reset button on the bottom of the disposal (towards the edge). See picture below.



Sandcastle Homes now installs a countertop push button (see image A) to control the disposal for your convenience. To use, simply press on or off. If it is not working, be sure the air hose (see image B) is connected to the control mechanism and the correct switch is in the position under the sink.



Image A



Image B



## *Maintenance Guidelines*

- After move-in, locate the main water line shut-off valve and all individual plumbing fixture valves and show all household members how to close them in case of a plumbing emergency.
- Never use scouring pads, abrasive cleaners or steel wool to clean plumbing fixtures, faucets or sinks. They can scratch the finish. Clean with a mild, non-abrasive cleaner.
- During winter months, set heat at 65 degrees minimum to prevent freezing.
- Clean garbage disposal blades by grinding up ice cubes. Freshen with baking soda and by grinding up citrus fruit rinds.
- Once a month flush any toilets and run the hot and cold water for a few minutes in any sinks, showers and bathtubs that are not frequently used.
- Twice a year clean out faucet aerators, spray nozzles and drains.
- Twice a year check all pipes and drains for leaks.
- Twice a year clean out drain stoppers and pour one cup of bleach down drains to break up potential drain clogs. Leave the bleach to set in drain for one hour then flush it with hot water.
- Once a year check water supply lines and valves to sinks, toilets, refrigerator and washer and tighten if loose.
- Do not use abrasive cleaners as these will damage the finishes in your showers and bathtubs.
- Prevent water spotting on the master shower surround by applying a coat of car wax on the glass and metal parts of the surround. Buff off when dry.
- Once a month be sure to use or run the hot and cold water on any showers and bathtubs that are not frequently used.
- Once a month check caulk around the shower and bathtubs and repair any cracks with a 100% silicone caulk; it's more expensive, but worth it! Also check and repair grout in wet areas.

## *Solutions to Common Plumbing Problems*

Problem	Likely Cause	Solutions
Toilet runs constantly.	Tank water level is too high.	Adjust float rod downward.
Toilet backing up or overflowing.	Obstruction in line.	Turn off toilet intake valve and plunge toilet.
Slow draining sink or bathtub.	Drain clogged.	Clean out drain to remove clog.
Reduced water flow or low water pressure.	Faucet aerator is clogged.	Unscrew and rinse aerator screen.
Garbage disposal is not running.	Tripped reset button/switch is off under the sink/air hose loose.	Check reset button on bottom of disposal.

## Roofing and Gutters

**Roof:** Roofing is the #1 thing in homes people neglect in maintenance. The roof receives the hardest wear of any part of a home. Hot sun, rain and fluctuating temperatures may cause unpredictable damage. Sandcastle Homes recommends having your roof professionally inspected for damage annually and following major storms; it is important to check the metal flashings and PVC pipe boots for caulk separation and shrinkage. Your roof is warranted for one year. Your shingles are warranted for 30 years.

**Attic Vents:** If driving rain enters the attic through the soffit or ridge vents, simply cover the insulation in front of the vent so that any precipitation that blows in can safely evaporate and ventilation can still occur. Do not allow vents to become obstructed with debris.



**Gutters and Downspouts:** Gutters channel water run-off from the roof to downspouts that guide the water to the drainage areas. It is your responsibility to maintain your gutters, downspouts and yard drains to ensure that they remain clean and efficient. Drainage is not warranted. Properly maintaining your landscaping and grading will help with drainage and will help prevent dry rot and termites as well. If rainwater is allowed to sit at the base of the home rather than following the drainage patterns away from the home, the excess of moisture can lead to costly foundation or pest problems.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Twice a year visually inspect your roof from the ground for broken or missing shingles and gaps in flashing. Call a professional to make repairs as needed.
- Twice a year or after any major rainstorm, clean gutters and downspouts.
- Have your roof professionally inspected once a year and after major storms and re-caulk the roof jacks and/or penetrations.
- Once a year check inside attic for signs of roof leaks.

## Security System

Any questions about the security system should be directed to the installation company on the Phone List on the back page of this manual. If you would like to order alarm monitoring, please note that contracting any company other than the original installation company could void the manufacturer's warranty on the security system. The security system installation company also installed the surround sound pre-wiring in your home.

## Siding

The siding on the exterior of your home is a fiber-reinforced cement product, chosen because of its durability and long-term resistance to weathering. The areas that receive the most exposure to sunlight and moisture will need to be refinished most frequently.

**Mildew:** Due to its streaky, black appearance, mildew is often mistaken for dirt. To test for mildew, apply a small amount of household bleach to the area. Mildew will bleach out in a few minutes, dirt will not. Mildew can permanently stain painted surfaces and it must be removed before re-painting, or it will continue to grow through the new paint.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Once a year clean siding by spraying with a mixture of bleach and water to remove mildew. Be sure to wear rubber gloves and eye protection. Regularly cleaning your siding will help the exterior paint last longer. Power washing can remove the paint and is not recommended for regular cleaning.
- Once a year check for cracked caulk and touch up the exterior caulk and paint as needed.

## Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide

The smoke detectors in your home are wired into the main electrical system and they have battery backups. They are wired in a series, so that if one alarm sounds, they will all sound. In each home, dual carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are installed outside of each sleeping area. If you would like to add carbon monoxide detectors to your home, purchase plug-in detectors for the main hallways, kitchen and attic.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Test and clean smoke detectors every six months, replacing batteries as needed. If the smoke detector is "chirping," the batteries need to be changed.
- When you replace batteries in your smoke detectors you need to reset them all by pushing the reset button the face of each smoke detector.
- It's a good idea to dust smoke detectors a couple times a year for maximum sensitivity

## Walls and Interior Trim

You may notice hairline cracks in the drywall or at the joints of interior trim. These cracks are caused by home settlement and changes in temperature and humidity. They are easily repaired with the paint provided in your paint touch-up kit. If during your first year in your new home a drywall crack exceeds 1/8" contact Sandcastle Homes to inspect it. Nail pops on interior walls are also common in new

construction and are not considered a defect. These are easily repaired with drywall compound and a paint touch-up. Any paint defects must be noted during your Introductory Walk as drywall cracks, nail pops, trim cracks and paint are not warranted. As a courtesy, Sandcastle Homes will provide one repair trip to correct minor settlement cracks - not paint touch-ups for the entire home - during your first year in your new home upon request only.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- To repair interior trim cracks and drywall cracks, apply a small amount of paintable caulk inside the crack. When dry, apply a coat of paint. Check all caulk for cracks once a year.
- To repair nail pops, reset the nail and add a small amount of drywall compound to cover the nail hole. When dry, apply touch up paint.
- Keeping your home at a consistent temperature year-round will greatly reduce drywall cracking.



Interior trim crack

## Water Heater

The gas water heater is located in the attic. The water temperature is adjustable, easily controlled by a dial on the front of the heater. However, if the heat is set too high, it can cause scalding. The recommended setting for households with children is 120 degrees or lower.



Other than re-lighting the pilot light, do not attempt to make repairs to your water heater; call a licensed plumber for all repairs. Do not tamper with the safety release valve on top of the water heater. Do not store combustible items or flammable liquids near your water heater. Do not use the top of the water heater as a storage shelf.

If you're not receiving any hot water, re-light the pilot light located at the bottom of the tank behind a small panel cover. If the water heater stops working again within 24 hours, contact Sandcastle Homes during your first year in your new home or a licensed plumber after your first year in your new home. Instructions for re-lighting the pilot are located on the face of the water heater. If you smell gas in the attic, call a licensed professional and do not attempt to re-light the pilot light.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- You'll add many years to your water heater's life by draining it once a year. To drain, secure a garden hose to the water heater valve, run the other end of the hose to the nearest bathtub or window and drain until hot water is no longer running. Allow several hours for the water heater to refill and heat up before running the hot water again.



## Windows

Your windows are aluminum, double-pane, low-e windows, designed for energy-efficiency and weather resistance. In heavy rain, water may collect in the bottom window tracks; the weep holes allow this water to escape outside. Keep the bottom window tracks clean to allow proper drainage.

**Condensation:** When warm air inside the home comes into contact with the cold window surface, condensation can form on the window. This is a normal occurrence, not a construction defect or a window problem. Simply wipe up the condensation as needed. However, condensation forming between the two panes of glass is warranted during your first year in your new home.



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- If a window is sticking, use a graphite lubricant to fix it. Window functionality is warranted during your first year in your new home.
- Wash windows by hand or place a towel in the window tracks before lightly spraying windows with a hose as the windows are not designed to handle water sprayed directly at the glass from a hose.

## Wood Floors

Through careful care, your wood floors will retain their appearance and functionality for many years. Wood floor tone, grain and color variations are normal and reflect the natural characteristics of real wood.

**End Peaking:** Sometimes, when the wood floor has absorbed too much moisture, the end joints will peak up a bit. Although some end joint peaking is normal, you can prevent excessive peaking by keeping your home at an even temperature and immediately cleaning any liquid spilled on wood floors. Water can easily ruin wood floors!



### *Maintenance Guidelines*

- Sweep, vacuum or dry mop your wood floors at least once a week. Never use a wet mop; it doesn't take much water to damage wood floors! The manufacturer recommends you use Pro-care Citrus Floor cleaner.
- Damages caused by sharp pointed objects, such as pet's claws and high heel shoes are not warranted.
- Place doormats or throw rugs in front of all exterior doors to protect wood floors.
- Do not slide furniture along the floors as this can scratch them.
- Do not use oils, wax, polish, Bona, Fantastic, Orange Glo, Old English, Formula 409, Endust, Pledge, Future mop and Glo or other similar products,
- Clean-up any spills immediately.



## **Contractor and Utility Provider Phone List**

**Contractor Contact Information:** The contractors listed below were used during the construction of your home. Please contact them directly if you have any questions or require maintenance outside of your warranty period.

<b><u>Service</u></b>	<b><u>Contractor</u></b>	<b><u>Phone Number</u></b>
Air Conditioning	Lone Star Air Systems	(281) 355-8485
Alarm/Security/Surround Sound	Data Smart	(713) 466-4999
Appliances	Bosch	(713) 868-3611
Electrical	Texas Electrical Contractors	(713) 721-4669
Gutters	Pizzitola Gutters	(713) 681-8600
Pest Control	Home Team Pest	(832) 468-1310
Plumbing	JD Earl Plumbing	(832) 230-4282
Roofing	Corey Roofing	(281) 477-9170
Tile and Grout	Fernando Tile and Marble	(281) 591-1233

**Emergency Contact Information:** If you have a service emergency during your first year of ownership outside of Sandcastle Homes' normal business hours, please contact the contractors below directly. During your first year of ownership, it is important that you contact these contractors before contacting Sandcastle Homes only for *absolute emergencies*. For all non-emergencies, please follow the link below to submit a warranty request to Sandcastle Homes.

<https://www.sandcastlehouston.com/contact-us/warranty/>

<b>Emergency</b>	<b>Definition of an Emergency Situation</b>	<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Electrical Failure	No electricity throughout at least half of your home.	Texas Electrical Contractors	713-721-4669
Sewer Back Up	Toilet backs up or nothing is draining.	JD Earl Plumbing	832-230-4282
Plumbing Leaks	Any uncontrollable leak that is damaging the walls, floors or other finishes. <b>Turn off main water shut off valve before calling.</b>	JD Earl Plumbing	832-230-4282
Air Conditioning Failure	No operational heating or cooling at all.	Lone Star Air Systems	281-355-8485
Roof Leak	Any water penetrating your interior ceiling.	Corey Roofing	281-477-9170

**Utility Provider Contact Information:** Your main utility providers are listed below. For questions or problems regarding street lights, right of way, illegal dumping, potholes, storm drains, water meters and more, please call the City of Houston's 311 Help Line.

<b><u>Utility</u></b>	<b><u>Provider</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Information</u></b>
Electricity	Your Choice of Provider	<a href="http://www.PowerToChoose.org">www.PowerToChoose.org</a>
Gas	CenterPoint Energy	(713) 659-2111
Water	City of Houston	(713) 371-1400
Trash	City of Houston	311