

## **Introduction**

This document provides general care guidance for major home systems installed in the property.

The information in this guide is intended to help homeowners understand how common residential systems operate and what routine maintenance practices help maintain their performance.

Residential homes include multiple systems that require periodic observation and maintenance. While many of these systems are designed for long-term reliability, lack of routine care may lead to reduced performance, premature wear, or service interruptions.

Understanding basic system care helps homeowners protect their investment and maintain safe and efficient operation of the home.

## **Purpose of This Guide**

The purpose of this guide is to provide homeowners with basic awareness of common residential building systems and the routine care practices typically recommended for them.

This guide focuses on homeowner observation and preventative maintenance practices. It is not intended to serve as a technical repair manual or a substitute for professional service.

Homeowners should use this document as a reference to better understand normal system behavior, recognize common maintenance needs, and determine when professional assistance may be appropriate.

## **Relationship with Home Warranty**

The information provided in this guide is intended for homeowner education and maintenance awareness.

Routine maintenance tasks described in this guide are generally considered homeowner responsibilities and are not typically covered under builder warranties.

Warranty coverage is limited to defects in materials or workmanship as defined in the 4U Homes Warranty Coverage Guide and applicable warranty documents.

Failure to perform routine maintenance may lead to conditions that are not covered under warranty.

## **Understanding Normal Home Behavior**

Homeowners should understand that residential homes are composed of many materials that naturally respond to environmental conditions such as temperature variation, humidity, and seasonal movement.

As a result, certain minor changes may occur during normal occupancy of the home. These conditions are common in residential construction and do not necessarily indicate construction defects.

Examples of normal residential conditions may include:

- minor drywall hairline cracks
- small stucco surface cracks
- minor trim separation
- flooring expansion gaps
- slight door alignment changes
- caulking shrinkage

These conditions typically result from natural building movement, material expansion and contraction, and environmental exposure.

Routine maintenance and periodic observation help ensure that these normal conditions do not develop into larger issues.

Homeowners should consult the **Warranty Coverage Guide** for clarification regarding warranty eligibility and evaluation procedures.

## **How to Use This Guide**

Each section of this document focuses on a specific home system and includes the following information:

- System Overview – a general explanation of the system and its function
- Routine Homeowner Maintenance – recommended observation and maintenance practices
- Common Issues Observed in Homes – conditions frequently observed in residential homes
- When to Contact a Professional – situations that typically require professional service

This structure allows homeowners to quickly locate information relevant to a specific system within the home.

## **HVAC System Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

The HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) system controls indoor temperature, humidity levels, and air circulation within the home.

In warm climates, HVAC systems operate frequently and require regular maintenance to ensure proper airflow, energy efficiency, and equipment longevity.

Proper maintenance of the HVAC system is a routine homeowner responsibility.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should perform the following maintenance tasks:

- Replace HVAC air filters every **1–3 months**
- Inspect the condensate drain line periodically
- Clean the condensate drain line every **6 months**
- Keep outdoor condenser units free of debris
- Schedule professional HVAC servicing **once per year**

Regular maintenance helps maintain system efficiency and indoor air quality.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

The most common HVAC issues typically result from lack of maintenance.

Examples include:

- clogged air filters restricting airflow
- blocked condensate drain lines causing water leaks
- frozen evaporator coils due to airflow restriction
- reduced cooling performance

In humid climates, algae growth inside the condensate drain line may cause water to overflow from the HVAC system.

Routine maintenance helps prevent these conditions.

### **Cooling System Performance Expectations**

Residential air conditioning systems are designed to maintain indoor comfort under typical residential operating conditions.

Under standard design conditions used throughout the United States, residential cooling systems are generally designed to maintain an indoor temperature approximately **18°F to 20°F below the outdoor temperature**.

Example:

If the outdoor temperature is **95°F**, the system is typically designed to maintain an indoor temperature near **75°F**.

During periods of extreme outdoor heat, the HVAC system may operate continuously in order to maintain the desired indoor temperature. Continuous operation during hot weather is normal and does not indicate a system malfunction.

Lowering the thermostat to extremely low settings may place excessive demand on the system and may contribute to evaporator coil freezing, particularly when airflow is restricted.

Frozen evaporator coils may result in:

- reduced cooling performance
- ice accumulation on the indoor unit
- temporary system shutdown
- water leakage when the ice melts

Maintaining reasonable thermostat settings and replacing air filters regularly helps prevent these conditions.

If the system is unable to maintain reasonable cooling performance under normal operating conditions, a licensed HVAC technician should evaluate the system.

### **Indoor Humidity Control**

Florida's climate includes high humidity levels for much of the year. Proper humidity control is essential for maintaining indoor comfort and preventing moisture-related issues.

Air conditioning systems help remove moisture from indoor air during normal operation. For effective humidity control, homeowners should avoid turning the HVAC system off for extended periods, especially during warm seasons.

Recommended indoor humidity levels are typically between **45% and 60% relative humidity**.

Allowing humidity levels to remain elevated for extended periods may contribute to:

- condensation on surfaces
- musty odors
- potential mold growth
- flooring movement or expansion

Maintaining regular HVAC operation and replacing filters regularly helps ensure effective humidity management.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Homeowners should contact a licensed HVAC technician if:

- the system is not cooling properly
- water is leaking near the indoor unit
- unusual noises occur during operation
- the circuit breaker trips repeatedly

## **Plumbing System Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

The plumbing system supplies water throughout the home and removes wastewater through drainage piping.

Proper maintenance helps prevent leaks, water damage, and unnecessary repairs.

Routine inspection of plumbing fixtures is part of responsible homeownership.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should periodically inspect:

- plumbing connections under sinks
- toilet supply lines

- washing machine hoses
- water heater connections
- exterior hose bibs

Leaks should be addressed promptly to prevent water damage.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common plumbing issues include:

- loose supply connections
- worn faucet components
- slow leaks under sinks
- dripping exterior hose bibs

Even small leaks can gradually cause:

- cabinet damage
- flooring deterioration
- mold growth
- increased water bills

Early detection helps minimize damage.

### **Freestanding Bathtub Use**

Freestanding bathtubs are designed to rest on the finished floor surface rather than being permanently fixed to surrounding walls or framing.

Because these tubs are not structurally anchored, a small amount of movement may occur when the tub is empty.

To minimize movement and provide proper stability during use, it is recommended that the tub be partially filled with water before entering or exiting.

The weight of the water helps stabilize the tub and distributes load more evenly across the floor surface.

Minor movement of an empty freestanding tub does not indicate an installation defect and is considered normal for this type of fixture design.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a licensed plumber if:

- a leak cannot be stopped
- water pressure drops unexpectedly
- plumbing connections fail
- the water heater is leaking

## **Bathroom Fixtures Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Bathroom fixtures such as bathtubs, shower valves, faucets, and drains are subject to regular use and exposure to moisture.

Routine observation and maintenance help prevent leaks and maintain proper operation.

### **Freestanding Bathtub Usage**

Freestanding bathtubs are typically supported by their base and rest directly on the finished floor surface.

To minimize movement during use, the tub should be filled with water before entering or exiting.

The weight of the water helps stabilize the tub and reduce the possibility of movement.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- inspect fixtures for leaks
- maintain caulking around tubs and showers
- ensure diverter valves operate properly

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common fixture concerns may include:

- minor dripping faucets
- worn sealants
- loose handles or valves

These conditions typically result from normal use.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a licensed plumber if:

- leaks cannot be stopped
- fixtures become loose
- water intrusion occurs.

## **Water Heater Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

The water heater provides hot water for household use including showers, sinks, dishwashers, and laundry appliances.

Water heaters operate continuously and may accumulate mineral sediment over time depending on local water quality.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- visually inspect the water heater for leaks
- ensure the area around the unit remains clear
- flush the tank annually to remove sediment buildup
- verify that the temperature pressure relief valve (TPR valve) remains unobstructed

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common water heater conditions include:

- sediment buildup reducing heating efficiency
- minor noise during heating cycles
- reduced hot water capacity
- mineral deposits in areas with hard water

Annual flushing helps maintain performance and extend equipment life.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a licensed plumber if:

- water is leaking from the tank
- hot water supply is significantly reduced

- the relief valve discharges continuously
- unusual noises occur during operation.

## **Electrical System Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

The electrical system distributes power throughout the home and includes the electrical panel, circuit breakers, outlets, and lighting fixtures.

Circuit breakers protect the home from electrical overloads.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should periodically:

- test GFCI outlets every **6 months**
- test smoke detectors monthly
- replace smoke detector batteries annually
- ensure electrical outlets remain dry and undamaged

These safety devices protect occupants from electrical hazards.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common electrical concerns may include:

- circuit breakers tripping due to overloaded circuits
- GFCI outlets needing reset
- loose outlet covers or fixtures

Repeated breaker trips may indicate an electrical issue requiring professional evaluation.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a licensed electrician if:

- breakers trip repeatedly
- sparks or burning smells are present
- outlets stop working unexpectedly
- exposed wiring is observed

## **Interior Finishes Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Interior finishes include drywall surfaces, interior paint, trim, doors, cabinetry, and other aesthetic components of the home.

These materials provide the visual appearance and functional usability of interior spaces but may naturally respond to environmental changes such as temperature variation, humidity, and normal structural movement.

It is common for newly constructed homes to experience minor cosmetic changes during the first year of occupancy as materials settle and adjust to environmental conditions.

These conditions are generally considered normal characteristics of residential construction rather than defects.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should periodically observe interior finishes and perform minor maintenance when needed.

Recommended practices include:

- maintaining stable indoor humidity levels
- performing minor paint touch-ups when necessary
- tightening loose cabinet hardware
- maintaining caulking in wet areas such as bathrooms and kitchens
- adjusting interior doors if minor alignment changes occur

Routine observation helps ensure that small cosmetic conditions do not develop into larger maintenance issues.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

The following conditions are commonly observed in residential homes and typically occur as a result of normal building movement and environmental changes:

- minor drywall hairline cracks
- drywall nail pops
- slight separation between trim components
- minor paint touch-ups

- small alignment changes in interior doors
- minor cabinet door adjustments

These conditions are typical characteristics of residential construction and do not generally indicate structural or construction defects.

Seasonal humidity variation may cause minor expansion or contraction of wood materials such as trim and cabinetry.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Homeowners should contact a qualified contractor if:

- cracks become unusually large or widespread
- interior doors cannot be adjusted to operate properly
- cabinetry becomes loose due to installation failure
- interior materials show signs of water intrusion or structural movement

Conditions related to moisture intrusion, plumbing leaks, or structural movement should be evaluated promptly.

## **Flooring System Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Modern residential flooring systems are designed to accommodate normal expansion and contraction caused by temperature and humidity changes.

Many flooring materials, including luxury vinyl plank (LVP), laminate flooring, and engineered wood flooring, are installed as floating systems.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- maintain stable indoor humidity levels
- avoid excessive water exposure
- use manufacturer-approved cleaning products
- protect flooring from heavy impact or sharp objects

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common flooring conditions include:

- small expansion gaps near walls or fixed objects
- minor plank movement in floating floor systems
- seasonal expansion or contraction
- small cosmetic surface marks from normal use

These conditions are typical characteristics of many flooring materials.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a flooring professional if:

- large sections of flooring lift or buckle
- flooring becomes loose due to installation failure
- moisture intrusion is suspected.

## **Tile and Grout Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Tile surfaces are commonly used in bathrooms, kitchens, and other areas exposed to moisture.

Grout and sealants between tile joints provide water resistance but require periodic maintenance.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- inspect grout lines periodically
- reseal grout if deterioration is observed
- maintain silicone sealant at corners and transitions
- avoid harsh chemical cleaners that may damage grout

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common conditions may include:

- small grout cracks due to structural movement
- grout discoloration from moisture exposure
- minor shrinkage of sealants

Routine maintenance helps prevent water infiltration behind tile surfaces.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a qualified contractor if:

- tiles become loose
- grout deterioration allows water infiltration
- large cracks appear in tiled surfaces.

## **Stucco & Exterior Wall Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Stucco is a durable exterior wall finish designed to protect the home from weather exposure.

Because exterior surfaces are exposed to sunlight, temperature changes, and moisture, periodic inspection is recommended.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- inspect stucco surfaces annually
- monitor small cracks in exterior walls
- inspect sealants around penetrations
- maintain exterior caulking around windows and doors

Small cracks should be sealed to prevent water infiltration.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Hairline cracks in stucco may occur due to natural building movement or environmental conditions.

If cracks are not sealed, moisture may eventually enter the wall assembly.

Water intrusion can lead to:

- interior drywall damage
- mold growth
- deterioration of building materials

Routine inspection helps prevent these conditions.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Homeowners should contact a qualified contractor if:

- cracks become larger or widespread
- moisture stains appear inside the home
- sections of stucco become loose or damaged

Hairline cracks smaller than approximately **1/16 inch** are common in stucco systems and typically result from natural curing shrinkage and environmental movement.

Routine sealing and repainting help maintain the weather resistance of the exterior wall system.

## **Roofing System Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

The roofing system protects the home from rain, wind, and environmental exposure.

Roofing materials are designed to withstand normal weather conditions but should be periodically inspected.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- visually inspect the roof from ground level annually and after major storms. If closer inspection is necessary, a qualified roofing professional should be contacted.
- inspect the roof after major storms
- remove debris accumulation if visible
- monitor for missing or displaced shingles

Regular inspection helps identify issues early.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common roof concerns may include:

- displaced shingles after storms
- debris accumulation
- flashing deterioration around penetrations

If damage is not addressed promptly, water intrusion may occur.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Homeowners should contact a licensed roofing contractor if:

- shingles are missing or damaged
- water stains appear on ceilings
- roof flashing appears loose or damaged

## **Windows and Doors Care Guide**

### **System Overview**

Windows and exterior doors provide natural light, ventilation, and weather protection.

Sealants and weather stripping help maintain energy efficiency and prevent water infiltration.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- inspect window and door sealants annually
- maintain exterior caulking
- clean window tracks
- lubricate hinges and locks as needed

These steps help maintain smooth operation.

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common concerns may include:

- deteriorated caulking around window frames
- worn weather stripping
- difficulty opening or closing windows

Failure to maintain sealants may allow water infiltration during storms.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Contact a qualified technician if:

- windows no longer seal properly
- water intrusion is observed
- glass damage occurs

## Garage Door System Care Guide

### System Overview

Garage doors operate using mechanical rollers, tracks, springs, and an electric opener.

Routine maintenance helps ensure safe operation.

### Routine Homeowner Maintenance

Homeowners should:

- lubricate rollers and hinges annually
- visually inspect tracks for debris
- test automatic reversal safety features

These steps help maintain smooth door operation.

### Common Issues Observed in Homes

Common garage door issues include:

- noisy operation
- worn rollers
- misaligned tracks

These conditions usually develop gradually through normal wear.

### When to Contact a Professional

Contact a qualified garage door technician if:

- the door does not open or close properly
- the door becomes unbalanced
- springs or cables appear damaged

Garage door springs are under high tension and should **never be adjusted by homeowners**.

## Site Drainage and Landscaping Care Guide

### System Overview

Proper site drainage directs rainwater away from the home to help protect the foundation and surrounding soil conditions.

Over time, soil conditions may change due to rainfall, irrigation, landscaping activity, and natural settlement.

### **Routine Homeowner Maintenance**

Homeowners should:

- monitor soil conditions around the foundation
- maintain proper grading away from the home
- ensure irrigation systems do not oversaturate soil near the foundation
- maintain landscaping and ground cover

### **Common Issues Observed in Homes**

Common site conditions include:

- minor soil settlement
- localized erosion after heavy rainfall
- landscaping changes affecting drainage patterns

These conditions are typical and require periodic observation and maintenance.

### **When to Contact a Professional**

Homeowners should consult a qualified contractor if:

- significant soil erosion occurs
- standing water persists near the foundation
- drainage patterns appear to direct water toward the home.

### **Additional Home Care Considerations**

Add introduction:

In addition to the individual systems described above, several general maintenance considerations help protect the long-term condition of the home.

These items relate primarily to environmental exposure, routine maintenance, and homeowner responsibilities rather than construction defects.

### **Site Drainage and Soil Settlement**

Natural soil settlement may occur after construction as the ground adjusts to weather conditions, rainfall, and landscaping activity.

Homeowners should periodically observe grading and drainage conditions around the home to ensure that water flows away from the foundation.

Over time, landscaping changes, irrigation patterns, or soil movement may alter surface drainage patterns.

Proper drainage helps prevent:

- standing water near the foundation
- soil erosion
- landscape deterioration

Adjustments to landscaping or soil grading may occasionally be necessary as part of normal property maintenance.

---

### **Dryer Vent Maintenance**

Clothes dryers produce lint during normal operation. Lint accumulation within dryer vent ducts may reduce airflow and increase drying times.

Over time, excessive lint buildup may create a potential fire hazard.

Homeowners should periodically clean the dryer lint trap after each use and consider professional cleaning of the dryer vent duct at regular intervals.

Signs that the vent may require cleaning include:

- longer drying cycles
- excessive heat during operation
- visible lint around vent outlets

Maintaining proper airflow helps ensure safe and efficient dryer operation.

---

### **Pest Control Responsibility**

Florida's climate naturally supports a variety of insects and small pests. Pest control and prevention are considered part of normal homeowner maintenance.

Homeowners may periodically observe common pests such as ants, roaches, spiders, or other insects.

Preventive pest management may include:

- routine pest control service
- maintaining clean indoor conditions
- sealing small exterior openings
- proper landscaping maintenance

Pest activity occurring after closing is generally related to environmental conditions and routine property maintenance rather than construction defects.

## **Maintaining Your Home Systems**

The systems installed in your home are designed to provide reliable performance when operated and maintained according to standard residential practices.

Like all mechanical and structural components, these systems are subject to normal wear, environmental exposure, and routine use over time. Regular observation and periodic maintenance help ensure that minor conditions do not develop into larger issues.

By becoming familiar with the systems described in this guide and performing routine maintenance when needed, homeowners can help maintain the comfort, safety, and long-term durability of their home.

Routine homeowner responsibilities may include:

- periodically observing the condition of home systems
- performing recommended maintenance tasks
- addressing minor issues before they worsen
- contacting qualified professionals when specialized service is required

Many situations commonly observed in residential homes are related to normal system operation, environmental exposure, or routine homeowner maintenance rather than construction defects.

Understanding how these systems operate helps homeowners distinguish between:

- normal system behavior
- homeowner maintenance items
- conditions that may require professional evaluation.

For clarification regarding warranty eligibility, homeowners should consult the **4U Homes Warranty Coverage Guide**, which explains in detail:

- the scope of builder warranty coverage
- homeowner maintenance responsibilities
- manufacturer product warranties
- procedures for requesting warranty evaluation.

Additional homeowner resources are also available through the **4U Homes website platform**, including maintenance guidance, emergency procedures, and frequently asked homeowner questions.

Proper care and maintenance will help ensure that the systems within your home continue to operate efficiently and reliably for many years.