

The One Year Warranty

Coverage & Maintenance

Under Georgia law, home builders must provide a written warranty to the buyer before starting work on any job valued at over \$2,500. (Georgia Code §43-41-7.). When it comes to new home construction, this is most commonly referred to as the Builder's One Year Warranty. It is important to have a clear understanding of what this does and does not cover.

At Ballast we use the "Homeowner's Handbook", published by the Atlanta Homebuilder's Association, to set expectations. We give this handbook out to all of our buyers to review. The handbook clearly states what is covered under the warranty and what is deemed a homeowner maintenance responsibility. Understanding the coverage helps us identify the best solution to a potential issue and helps to avoid confusion. It is paramount that every new homeowner familiarizes themselves with the handbook.

Typically, we like to do a warranty review 90 days after closing, followed by a final warranty review during the 11th month after the closing. The handbook lays out the process for scheduling warranty appointments with these exceptions, which are considered emergency services:

- Whole-house electrical outage
- Water outage
- Furnace outage
- Gas leak (call the gas company FIRST)
- Plumbing leak requiring whole house water shut off

While an air conditioning outage is not considered an emergency service, we do everything in our power to get that addressed immediately.

An often misunderstood aspect of the home warranty is the landscaping. New homeowners might believe the landscaping is covered but it is not. Once a homeowner takes possession of their new home, the builder has no control over care, maintenance, or weather. Therefore, it is the homeowner's responsibility to properly maintain and care for all exterior plants and grass.

Appliances and equipment are not warranted by the builder. The individual warranties are transferred to the owner and it is the new owner's responsibility to register these warranties in their name. Appliances and equipment included but are not necessarily limited to:

- Kitchen Hood Vent
- Refrigerator
- Ovens and ranges
- Dishwasher
- Microwave
- Water Heater
- Furnace
- Air handler
- Garbage Disposal
- Trash Compactor

Often, just the act of a homeowner registering their product warranties can result in the manufacturer's warranty period being extended or even doubled. We highly recommend that the homeowner registers for these warranties immediately upon taking possession of

the home to avoid forgetting to do so later.

Another important consideration is that in the unlikely event that something covered goes awry, it is the homeowner's responsibility to take every reasonable step to mitigate the damage being done from the time the issue is discovered to the builder addressing it. If your roof is leaking, be sure to move furniture, cover cabinetry and flooring and contain water with buckets or other containers. If you are experiencing an electrical short at an outlet, stop using it and turn the breaker off. Any loss or damage caused by a homeowner's failure to take reasonable steps to mitigate such damage would not be covered.

Frozen pipes are never covered, so don't forget to close the inside valve and open the outside valve on your hose spigots during cold weather to prevent the pipes from freezing. During the warranty period, if you have a contractor working in your house that is not the builder, there is a very real potential to void your warranty. During the one-year period it is important to rely on your builder to address any issues with mechanical and structural components. Before you do any construction work, such as an attic build-out or finishing a basement, check with the builder and make sure you have a clear understanding of how such work may affect your warranty.

Simple DIY Maintenance

Performing simple regular maintenance on appliances and equipment is the best way to prevent issues. Maintenance is easy to overlook, but the consequences of not doing it can be a real inconvenience. Imagine if your AC stopped blowing cold air on the hottest day of summer - in Atlanta. Here are some things you should mark on your calendar and set automatic reminders for: The first and most important item: smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be tested once a month.

Change your air filter regularly. This should be done every 90 days in homes without pets or residents with significant allergy issues. Failure to replace this filter will eventually lead to your AC shutting down. Additionally, your AC evaporator coil could freeze and the HVAC systems components will wear prematurely. If you have a single pet, change every 60 days. More than one pet or if there are occupants with allergies, change your filter every 20 to 45 days. Always be sure to use the proper size and appropriate MERV rating. If your filter is the wrong size, it will not work as intended. If the MERV rating is too high, it may not allow for proper air flow and may clog prematurely.

Change the water filter in your refrigerator every 6 months. Failure to do so will allow contaminants to seep into your drinking water. If you are getting poor water flow at the fridge, this is a sign that your filter is probably clogged.

Be sure to use the proper size filter, and use only NSF Internationally certified filters. NSF certifies filters based on look and taste, health concerns and emerging contaminants (new contaminants). Have your gutters cleaned at least twice a year. If you have a lot of trees on your property, it can be necessary to have your gutters cleaned as often as every three months. Failure to maintain clean gutters can lead to very expensive damage caused by water intrusion.

PRO TIP: If you live in a modern style house that has a hip roof surrounded by a parapet wall (a simulated flat roof), we recommend that you install a camera or two on the roof in order to easily monitor debris accumulation. Not only can this clog your gutters but it could also cause standing water to accumulate. A gallon of water weighs almost 8.5 lbs. A large accumulation of water can not only cause leaks but the weight can cause undue stress on your roof system. While Ballast does not build this type of roof system, we have been called to fix the costly consequences of improper maintenance. Roof cameras and an automated calendar reminder to check the feed every so often is a great way to

monitor this.

Check that all of your windows are fully closed in the spring and fall. Sometimes windows are left slightly open or can open just a fraction if the locks are not properly engaged. Checking your windows for proper seal can help you avoid "heating/cooling the outdoors".

Tree limbs should be monitored regularly and trimmed as needed. Trees grow slowly which is why you might not recognize an issue until it's already happening. As a good rule of thumb, trim all limbs that hang low over your roof, never allowing limbs to touch your house.

Front-loading washing machine filters should be cleaned anywhere from once a month to twice yearly, depending on the manufacturers guidelines and frequency of use. A clogged washing machine could cause your washer to abruptly stop working, or worse - it could cause a water leak.

Kitchen hood vent filters should be changed or cleaned every one to three months, depending on the frequency with which you use the stove.

The above list is not all-inclusive but a good starting point for you to get in tune with your home's regular maintenance needs. Once it becomes a habit to notice and address these types of things, you will naturally become more aware of other needs as they arise. Ultimately, this maintenance and awareness habit could help you to avoid more serious issues and the costs that always accompany them.

The one-year warranty is a great tool for homeowners but it is not an automatic fix for every issue that may arise in your new home. Be sure to read the warranty and or handbook provided by your builder to gain a thorough understanding of what is and isn't covered and the process your builder uses to remediate any issues that might arise.

