

TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW HOME



PAINTWORK AND PRESERVATIVE STAINS

New woodwork absorbs a lot of paint or stain so the first painting of a house may not give as good a finish as later repainting. Outside woodwork (and any places inside where there is often condensation) should be regularly repainted or restained to preserve the wood. The first repainting outside will probably be needed in about two years, but after that — provided it is properly done — repainting or staining should only be necessary every four or five years. You may need to do it more often if you live by the sea or in an atmosphere harmful to paint (local people will tell you).

If carrying out painting yourself, always remember to prepare the surface properly. NEVER paint on wet wood.



External decoration is best done in summer or early autumn.

Inside the house, the first painting of the walls will probably have been done with a light paint which lets moisture work itself out during the drying period. Further coats of emulsion and oil-based paints or wall-paper can be used for later redecoration, which can be done successfully any time after the walls have dried out (this normally takes nine to twelve months). When you redecorate you can make good with filler the minor paint or plaster cracks which are the result of normal drying-out and shrinkage.

When you redecorate, "Artex" and other similar plastic compound ceiling finishes should never be sanded — only wash if they already have been sealed with paint. Lightly brush before painting. Then, use one or two coats of emulsion.

In no circumstances should water be applied to these ceilings until after this has been done. The texture may be spoilt if you do.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW HOME

SLOPING ROOFS

Tiles are brittle and easily cracked. They are not designed to take someone's weight. Anyone working on the roof, e.g. to install a television aerial, MUST use a roof ladder.

Do not store heavy articles in the roof space. It is not normally designed to carry loads.

FLAT ROOFS

Flat roofs are not normally designed to take heavy loads and can easily be damaged. Do not allow window cleaners or decorators to use the roof for access without protecting the roof surface.

Check flat roofs each Autumn. Repair any cracks or splits. Clear rainwater gutters and outlets. Stone chippings on the roof are there to protect the felt. Do not remove.

MANHOLES AND RODDING-EYES

These give access to the foul and storm drains. Ask your builder if you cannot locate them.

Do not obstruct or cover them with soil. You may need to get access to them quickly in the event of a blockage.

GUTTERS AND GULLIES

Clean out from time to time, to prevent silting up. Wet patches (which can lead to dry rot) may be caused by choked rainwater pipes or gutters. Inspect and clean at least once a year. Be careful not to place ladders against plastic gutters.

DAMP-PROOF COURSES AND AIRBRICKS

If soil or other garden material is piled up against the outside walls, it may cover the damp-proof course and airbricks. This can lead to trouble (e.g. dry rot and rising damp) if you have a suspended timber floor, because it blocks under-floor ventilation. If you are not sure where the damp-proof course is, your builder will show you. Keep soil and paving at least six inches below it.

PATHS

Don't worry if paths or paving develop minor cracks as the ground slowly settles in the first two or three years.

Paths beside the house must be two brick courses below the damp-proof course and slope away from the house.

SANITARY WARE

Baths, showers, basins and sinks should be cleaned with recommended products to avoid damaging surfaces. Do not use scouring or gritty cleaners, particularly on fibre-glass or plastic sanitary ware. Bleach should not be mixed with lavatory powders nor allowed to stand in stainless steel sinks. Rinse away with plenty of clean water.



ENERGY SAVING

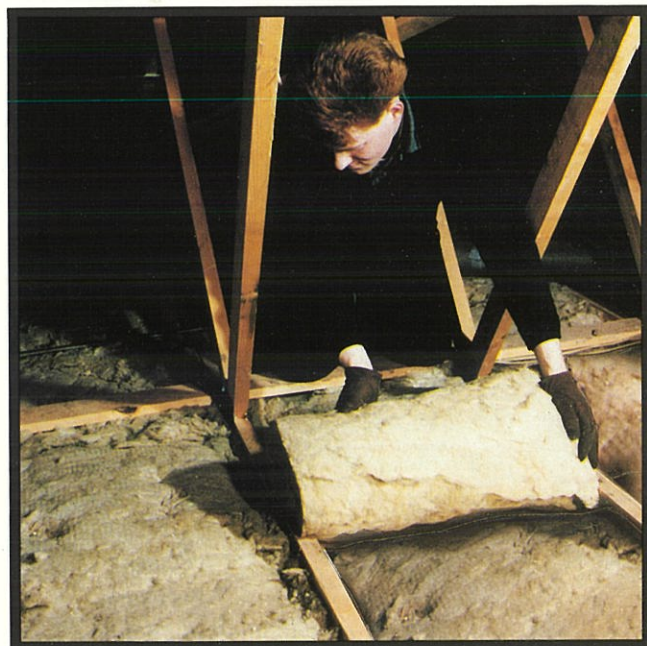
TEN TIPS TO SAVE ON YOUR FUEL BILL WHICH COST NOTHING

CENTRAL HEATING

1. Set the room thermostat on your central heating, if you have it, not higher than 17C (65F). Most people find this warm enough when they first move into a centrally heated home.
2. Buy your fuel wisely; bulk purchases at out of season rates can give considerable savings on heating oil and solid fuel.
3. If you have a time switch on your heating system, use it to reduce the time the boiler is in use to a minimum. Most people don't need the heat on overnight.
4. If you have room thermostats turn them down to the lowest setting that is comfortable. Vary the settings for the time of year and what you are doing. In the Autumn and Spring you can save by using the heating only when it is really necessary. When you are working about the home you will not need the same temperature as when you are sitting watching television. But be careful, old people and young children need more heat.

HOT WATER

5. Gas or solid fuel central heating boilers will normally heat the hot water supply more cheaply than an immersion heater if it is using full price electricity.
6. As your hot water storage cylinder will be insulated the water will remain hot for long periods. It is normally wasteful



See item 3 opposite.

to heat the water constantly. Try heating it for a short period each morning and evening.

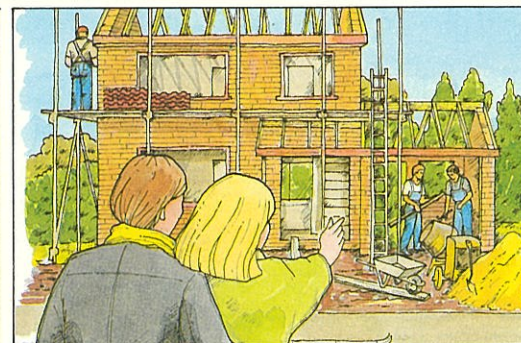
GENERAL

7. Wear warmer clothes indoors. Putting on a woolly means you can turn down the heating. Every degree lower is a saving.
8. Don't constantly heat unused rooms. No harm will be done providing the temperature does not fall below about 10C (50F). You can air and heat the unused rooms occasionally to prevent them becoming damp. Choose a warm dry day for this. Otherwise keep the room doors closed.
9. Heavy or lined curtains drawn over the windows are effective insulation. The sooner you draw the curtains the more heat you will save. Radiators should not be behind drawn curtains.
10. Turn off lights, cooking appliances etc as soon as they are not needed.

NHBC TEN YEAR PROTECTION

WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

DURING CONSTRUCTION



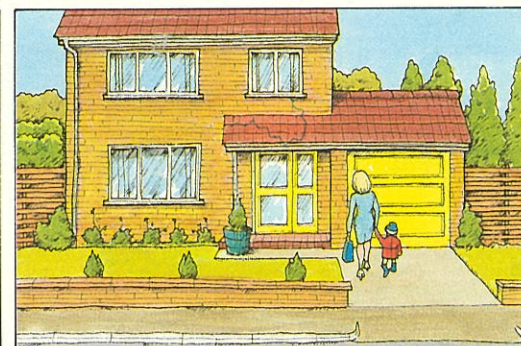
Cover provided (up to £10,000) to safeguard deposits lost through Builder's bankruptcy or liquidation, or to remedy defects which prevent the issue of the Notice of Insurance Cover.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS



The builder must remedy, at his own expense, any defects which arise as a result of his not keeping to NHBC's standards for materials and workmanship. If the builder does not repair defects then the purchaser has a right to arbitration under the NHBC scheme.

THE THIRD TO TENTH YEARS



Insurance against major damage due to any defect in the load bearing structure. It does not cover ordinary repairs, or defects which do not cause damage.

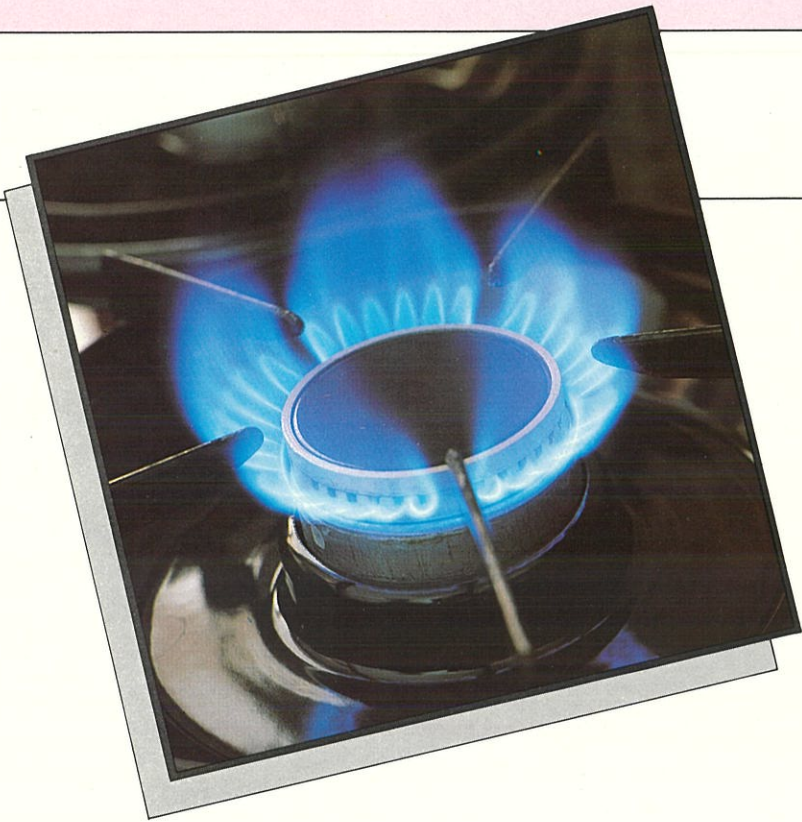
IF YOU SELL BEFORE THE END OF THE WARRANTY



Second and subsequent purchasers are safeguarded against new defects which appear and which cause damage after they have bought the dwelling.

The information given above is only an indication of your rights and obligations. Please read carefully pages 22 and 23 and the "Explanatory Notes" which are attached to the House Purchasers Agreement signed by the purchaser and vendor.

SERVICES



GAS

In no circumstances tamper with your gas installation or equipment. Instead call your local Gas Board or CORGI (Council of Registered Gas Installers) registered installer.



IF YOU SUSPECT A GAS LEAK

1. Extinguish all naked flames.
2. Turn off gas at meter. The location of the meter and stopcock should be stated on the Home Owner's Information Card.
3. Open doors and windows.
4. Call the Gas Board on its emergency number, which is in the telephone directory under "GAS". There is no call out charge.

THE THIRD TO TENTH YEARS

Protection against major damage caused by defects in the structure.

From the beginning of the third year to the end of the tenth year NHBC protection provides insurance cover against major damage caused by structural defects.

Broadly the cover is for such items as subsidence or settlement or other structural defects causing major damage as for example:- collapse of or serious distortion of joists or roof structure, chemical failure of materials affecting the load bearing structure, dry rot.

NHBC will accept responsibility only where damage has occurred which necessitates extensive repair works to the dwelling (e.g. in foundation cases, damage classified as 'severe' or 'very severe' in Digest 251 of the Building Research Establishment).

Your NHBC insurance policy does not cover any claim which is covered by legislation or by your own house owner's normal insurance policy. Nor does it cover

theoretical defects such as slightly undersized joists which are not causing any damage. There must be evidence that the house is suffering damage or is likely to do so.

If you think your house or flat is suffering from major damage or is likely to do so:

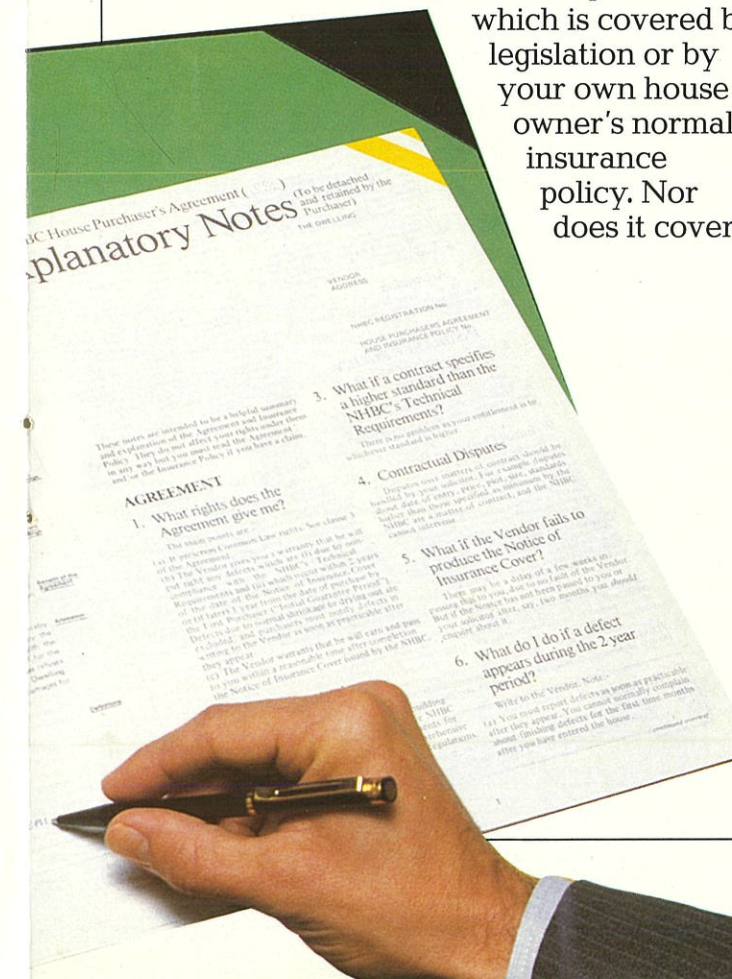
1. Check to see whether the damage is covered by your normal house owner's insurance policy (subsidence and heave usually are). If so write to the insurance company. NHBC will assist you by paying the "excess" on the policy which is normally £500, for valid claims.
2. If the damage is not covered by your normal house owner's insurance policy write to NHBC's Conciliation and Insurance Department at the address on the rear cover. You will be sent leaflets explaining the cover and forms to complete if you think you have a claim.

If you make a claim against NHBC and you disagree with its decision, you can — as during the first two years — go to arbitration.

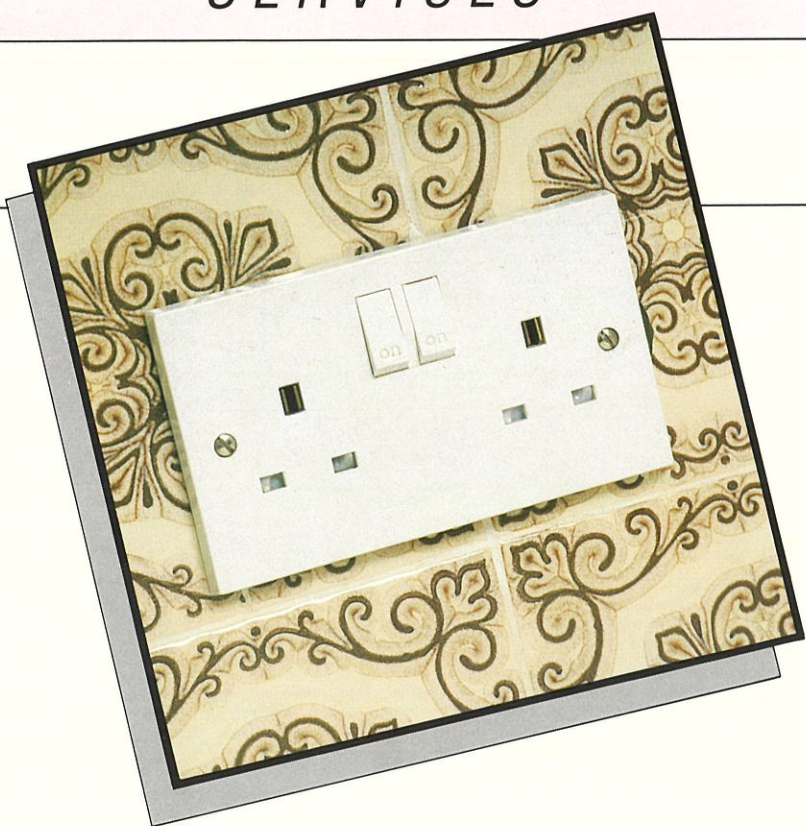
The maximum amount payable under N.H.B.C.'s insurance cover is the price you paid for your house or flat (with a maximum of three times the national average purchase price of a new house) increased each year in line with inflation (up to a maximum of 12% per year compound).

NHBC insurance does not detract in any way from your contractual or other rights. It applies even if the builder has retired or gone out of business.

IT MUST BE STRESSED THAT THIS PROTECTION POLICY DOES NOT RELIEVE THE OWNER OF HIS NORMAL MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES OR THE NEED TO CARRY OUT NORMAL REPAIRS.



SERVICES



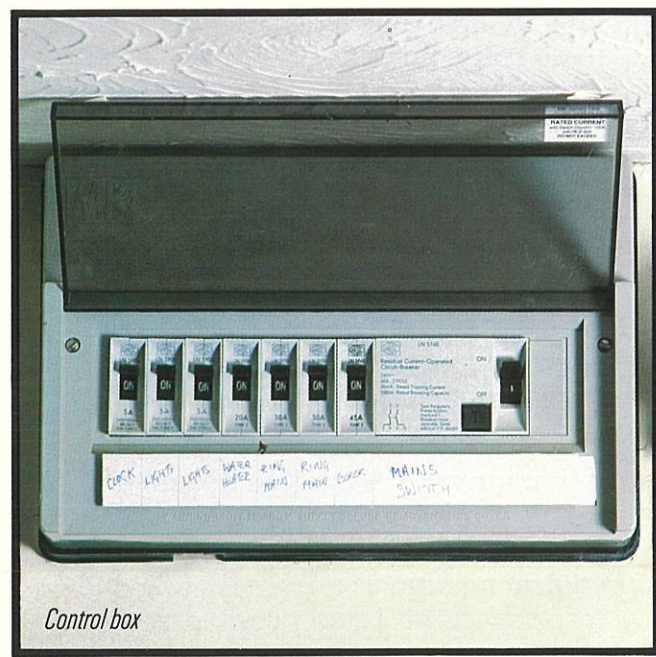
ELECTRICITY

The electricity cable will enter your home through your electricity meter. The meter and the cable leading into it from outside belong to the Electricity Board and must not be tampered with in any way. All cables and equipment on the house side of the meter are your responsibility.

The wires leading from your meter will go first into a control box containing the main on/off switch controlling the supply to the whole house and a number of fuses or circuit breakers which protect the individual circuits. The fuses will normally have been labelled by the installing electrician with details of the circuits controlled.

Typical lighting circuits and ring main circuits are illustrated in the diagrams opposite. These do not necessarily show where the cables will run in your house. However all cables for circuits which are not protected by conduits or pipes are required by NHBC to run vertically above

or below the socket or switch being served or horizontally within 150mm of the ceiling or within a band between 150mm and 300mm of floor level.

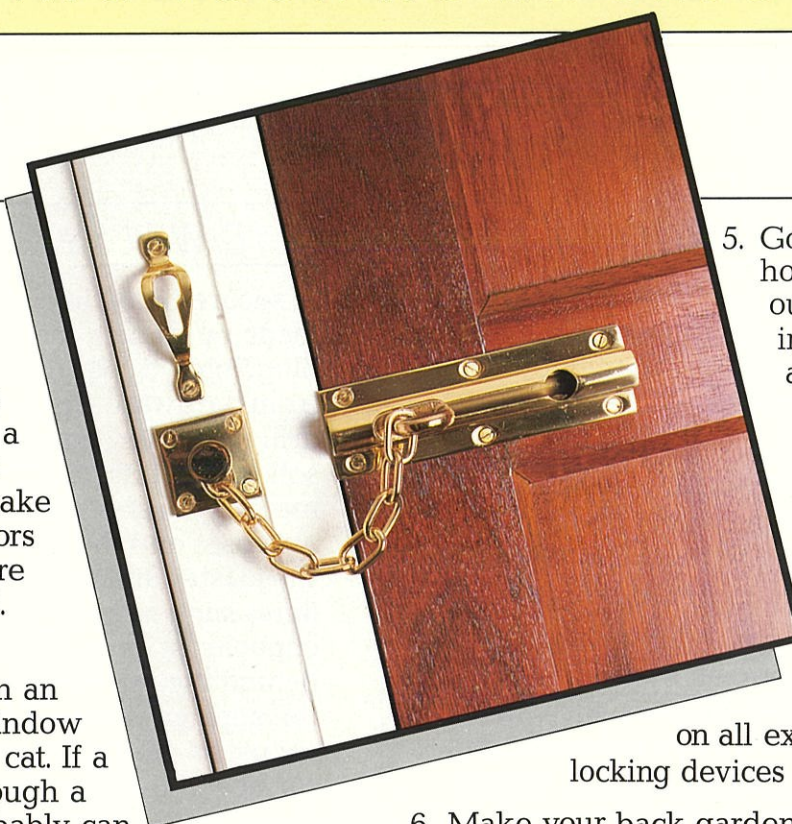


Control box

KEEPING YOUR HOME SECURE

Here are some useful tips from police authorities:

1. Whenever you leave the house — even to visit a neighbour for a short time — make sure that all doors and windows are securely locked.
2. Do not leave a window — even an upper storey window — open for the cat. If a cat can get through a window so probably can a burglar.
3. Do not leave ladders, steps etc. visible in the garden.
4. Try at all times to make the house look as if it were occupied.
 - (i) leave the lights on in the evening; get a neighbour to come in to switch them on; use a time switch which will work automatically.
 - (ii) Remember to cancel papers, milk and other regular deliveries before going on holiday.
 - (iii) Arrange for a neighbour or friend to cut your grass and generally keep an eye on the property while you are away.
 - (iv) Never leave valuable and easily transportable items like video units where they can be seen by looking through a window. The temptation may prove too much for a passing burglar.
 - (v) Hide small valuable items like jewellery or even better take them to your bank before going on holiday.



5. Go round your house carefully outside and in, imagining you are a burglar.

Look for weak points where a burglar could gain entry. As necessary, make entry more difficult by fitting security locks

on all external doors and locking devices on windows.

6. Make your back garden private and secure. Lock rear entry gates.
7. Keep front hedges and fences no more than waist high, so that neighbours can see your front and side doors.
8. Make sure that the contents of your house are adequately insured against fire and theft and that any provisions for declaration of valuable items etc are complied with.
9. Photograph valuable items and use the new marking methods available, so that your goods can be traced if stolen.

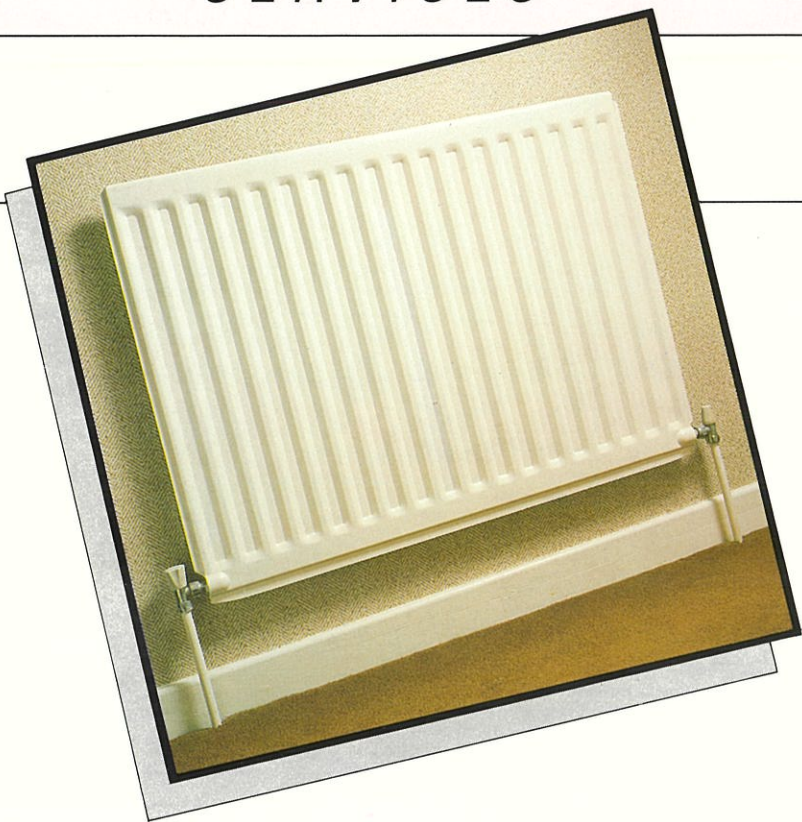
NOTE

Make sure that all doors and windows, including those in garages and sheds, are securely locked.

If you live in sheltered housing, please consult the Warden or Estates Manager before fitting any security devices to your home. The warden must be able to get in to help you in a crisis.

BEFORE GOING ON HOLIDAY IN WINTER FOLLOW CAREFULLY THE ADVICE GIVEN ON PAGES 9 AND 11.

SERVICES

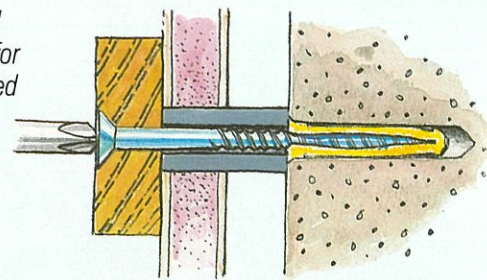


CENTRAL HEATING

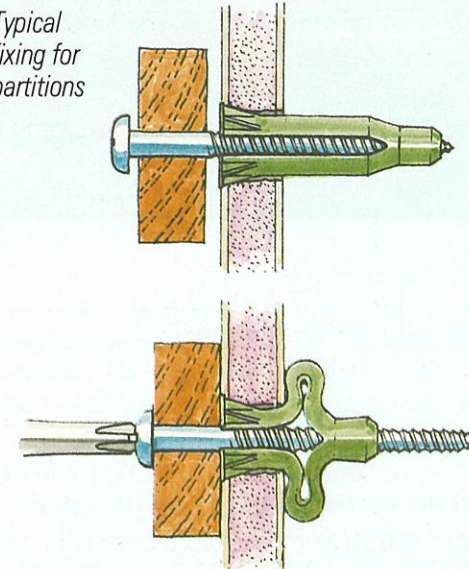
1. Central Heating systems are of two basic types — those which use water to distribute heat around the house and those which do not. Illustrated opposite is a typical water-borne or wet system in which the water is heated in a boiler which may be fired by gas, electricity, oil or solid fuel. It is then distributed to radiators in different parts of the house. "Dry" systems include warm air, electric under floor and storage heating.
2. Most central heating systems have controls to enable you to regulate the time and temperature of operation. In some systems these are quite complicated and operating instructions should have been given to you. If you do not understand your system fully you should ask your builder to explain it. Careful use of the controls will give maximum comfort at minimum cost. It is important to maintain the boiler temperature within the range recommended by the manufacturer.
3. If the system in your house is a water-borne system it will be supplied with water from a small header tank, which is usually near the cold water storage tank in the roof space. This small tank should be checked each year before the heating is switched on to make sure that it contains water and that the ball valve is working properly. If not it is usually enough to move the float arm up and down a few times to clear the valve. If you cannot get the valve to work **CALL A PLUMBER.**
4. If you have a warm air central heating unit remember to clean the air filter regularly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If you don't your system may not operate efficiently.

HINTS FOR THE HANDYMAN

Typical fixing for dry lined walls.



Typical fixing for partitions



DRY LINED WALLS

6. Fixing to a dry lined wall is done in much the same way as fixing to a solid wall but the fixing device must cross the small cavity behind the plasterboard and penetrate well into the solid wall behind. Suitable proprietary fixing devices are available from most D.I.Y. shops.

PARTITIONS

7. Before fixing to a partition try to locate the position of the framework or studs by tapping across the wall. These studs are normally about 600mm apart and they produce a dull solid sound. If you are not sure exactly where a stud is you can locate it by making a very small hole with a bradawl on the spot where you think the stud may be. If there is a cavity behind the plaster board you have missed the stud. Try again by making a series of very small holes 40mm apart on either side of the first hole until the bradawl encounters wood. That is the stud.

If your fixing is to go into a stud you can drill through the plaster board into the wood and use a wood screw in the normal way.



SERVICES



WATER

The drawing opposite shows a typical water supply and disposal system. It will almost certainly differ in some respects from the system in your new home but the basic principles should be the same.

MAINS STOPCOCK

The cold water supply enters your house via a stopcock which is frequently placed under the kitchen sink. It is important to find out where this main stopcock is and its location should be stated clearly on the Home Owner's Information Card supplied by the builder.

COLD WATER STORAGE

Cold water comes in from the rising main via the main stopcock. It is stored in the cold water storage tank which is often in the roof space. The cold water tap in the kitchen also comes directly from the rising main. In some parts of the country the other cold taps are also fed directly from the rising main.

Elsewhere these taps are fed from the cold water storage tank and in this case, they do not supply drinking water.

There will also be separate stopcocks on the cold water supply pipe from the cold water storage tank and on the pipe serving the hot water installation. Find out where these are so that sections of the plumbing system can be shut off in the event of a leak, or if you want to change a washer or make any alterations.

DRAINING DOWN

There is also at least one drain-down cock to enable the system to be emptied of water. They are normally located in the lowest point in the system under the sink and near to any boiler.

The system must not be drained until all forms of water heater have been switched off and solid fuel boilers put out and allowed to cool. If in doubt — CALL A PLUMBER.

HINTS FOR THE HANDYMAN

4. When the trap has been removed fish around with a flexible rod or piece of wire to dislodge the blockage.
5. Replace the trap and screw it firmly home.
6. Wash the system thoroughly with a good deal of very hot water and soda.
7. Check to make sure that the trap does not leak. If it does tighten a little more firmly or seal with a proprietary sealant.
8. THE RISK OF FUTURE BLOCKAGES CAN BE REDUCED IF YOU REMEMBER TO PUT ALL FAT WHICH SOLIDIFIES WHEN COLD INTO AN EMPTY TIN OR MILK CARTON RATHER THAN DOWN THE DRAIN. WHEN IT HAS SOLIDIFIED IT CAN BE PUT IN THE DUSTBIN. AND DO NOT PUT TEA LEAVES — ESPECIALLY LARGE ONES — DOWN THE DRAIN.

BLOCKAGES IN BASINS AND BATHS

1. These are usually caused by a build up of hair and soap.
2. If the basin or bath begins to drain away more slowly than before take a piece of wire — a piece from a wire coat hanger is suitable — bend the end into a small hook and use this to fish *carefully* down the plug to bring up the matted hair which is causing the problem. This must be done gently to avoid damaging the waste pipe.

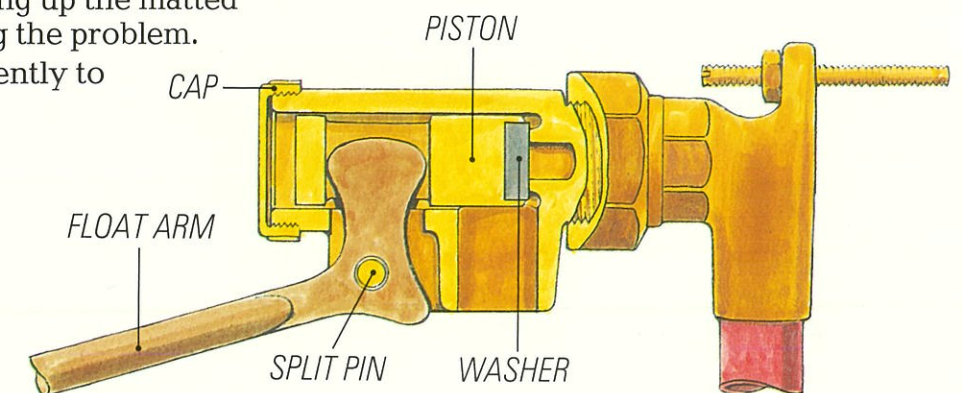
BALL VALVES

The level of water in your cistern is controlled by a ball valve and if this is not working properly the overflow pipe will drip. If this happens check the cistern to see whether or not the valve has a screw adjustment mechanism which can be altered to cause the valve to cut off before the water level reaches the overflow.

If there is no such adjustment screw or if it cannot be adjusted to prevent the cistern from overflowing, the washer in the ball valve may be worn or grit or scale may be lodged in the valve itself. If so the procedure on most types of ball valves is as follows:-

1. Turn off the water supply to the cistern.
2. Remove the split pin holding the float arm to the valve. Remove the arm.
3. Remove the screw cap if any from the valve.
4. Slide the piston from the valve by inserting a screw driver in the slot from which the float arm was removed. Unscrew the cap from the end of the piston; remove and replace the washer; clean the piston and valve to remove all grit and scale; reassemble and turn on the water.

BE CAREFUL. Some modern ball valves contain plastic parts which can be broken if not treated gently.



RUNNING-IN YOUR NEW HOME

New homes now being built incorporate a great many improvements in construction which NHBC has introduced over the years, but your new house still needs to be run-in gently for the first few months.

This is because bricks, timber, plaster and other materials have all absorbed water during construction; it is there in the fabric. There is a great deal of moisture around when you move into a new home. You may not feel it, and it will certainly not do you any harm.

But as the house or flat is lived in and heated, it has to dry out. As it dries out, the wood and plaster (in particular) will shrink, causing small cracks which are not structurally important and which can be permanently cured in the normal process of redecoration. Because these cracks cannot altogether be prevented or concealed at reasonable cost, the builder is not normally legally bound to put them right unless they are abnormally large. **It is in your own interest, therefore, to follow the advice given here.**

Timber frame houses

These are less liable to shrinkage cracks, but the advice holds good.

TWO RULES

First, try to keep a reasonably even temperature. If you have central heating, use it sparingly at first so that the building warms up gradually — this will save fuel bills too.

Second, encourage ventilation by leaving windows and internal doors, including doors of built-in cupboards, open a few inches wherever you reasonably can. Failure to do so may result in condensation.

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when cooking or washing. These activities create a great deal of water vapour which should not be allowed to spread round the house. Switch on any extractor fan or open a window.

PREVENTING CONDENSATION

Condensation is steam or water vapour which turns into water (condenses) on cold surfaces.

Next to shrinkage, condensation is the most common problem in new houses and flats. It can damage clothes, bedding, floor coverings, decorations and the house itself.



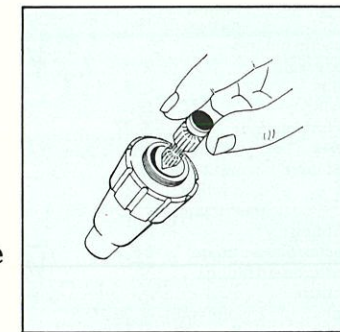
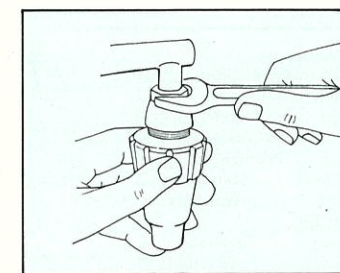
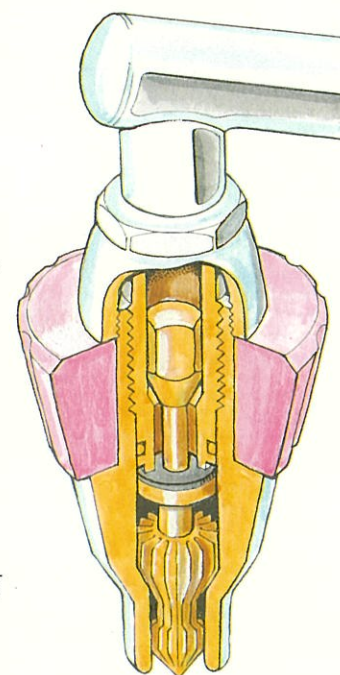
HINTS FOR THE HANDYMAN

SUPATAPS

1. A supatap is attached below the pipe which feeds it (see diagram). The advantage of a supatap is that you do not need to turn off the water when changing the washer.

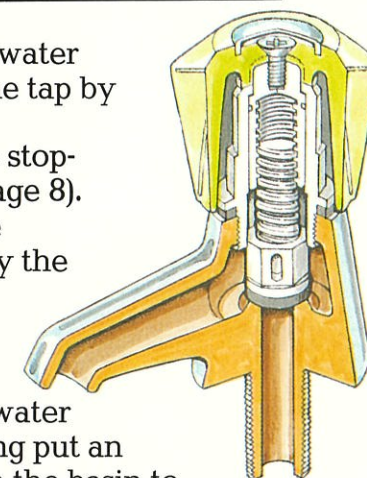
The procedure is as follows:

- a) Turn the tap on slightly to release the tension on the lock nut
- b) unscrew the lock nut
- c) holding the lock nut firm turn the tap on (i.e. turn it anticlockwise) until the automatic valve operates and the water stops running
- d) unscrew the handle completely and push out the combined jumper and anti-splash nozzle
- e) remove and replace the jumper
- f) reassemble in the reverse order having cleaned out the anti-splash nozzle.



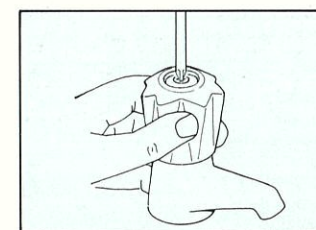
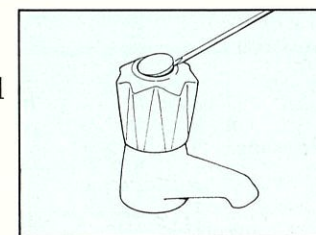
SHROUDED-HEAD TAPS

1. Cut off the water supply to the tap by closing the appropriate stop-cock (see page 8).
2. Turn on the tap to empty the pipe.



3. When the water stops flowing put an old towel in the basin to protect it and to stop screws from disappearing down the waste.

4. Remove the head. In some taps this is held in place by friction and can simply be pulled off. In others there is a small screw which must first be undone. This may be concealed beneath a



5. Remove the centre unit by unscrewing the large nut holding it in place. If necessary apply counter pressure to avoid straining the pipe.
6. Remove the washer which is attached to a small plunger and replace it with a washer of the same size putting the smooth side against the plunger.
7. Reassemble in reverse order. Close the tap and turn on the water.

