

B. Maintenance

One of the main differences between co-ops and rental accommodation is that the general upkeep of the project is carried out by the members, with paid professionals only being called in for major repairs and emergency situations.

By taking care of our units and the Co-op's buildings and grounds ourselves, we are able to save money, which in turn helps to keep our housing charges lower.

Care of Your Unit

We would like you to regard your unit as your own, and as such, take care of the minor repairs that are needed occasionally. However, if a major problem does occur, don't hesitate to call the Property Co-ordinator, so that professional help can be obtained. Please remember that "if and when you vacate your unit, the Co-op must prepare it for it's next occupant".

The following are some suggestions that will help to reduce the cost of renovations and maintain the appearance of your unit during your occupancy:

1. Countertops- Countertops are not meant to be a cutting surface, and will become badly marked if used in this manner. Always use a cutting board. Although the laminated surface has good heat resistance, it can be damaged by placing hot ovenware on it. Do not use cleaners which scratch the surface, like Comet or Ajax. Use a non-abrasive cleaner.
2. Sinks, Counters, Baths- Use an all purpose cleaner on all porcelain. Abrasive cleaners can scratch the surface and ruin our sinks and bathtubs.
3. Decorating- Feel free to decorate your unit, but do not use dark paint on the walls and use only dry strippable wallpaper. Self-adhesive mirror or cork tiles should not be mounted directly on the wall because the adhesive destroys the drywall surface.
4. General Policy on Improvements-If a member wants to make any improvements to a unit, he/she must bring it as a proposal to the Property Co-ordinator or Board of Directors. Improvements may be anything from painting to re-tiling a floor, to putting up a wall or shelving to hanging wallpaper. It will be determined whether:
 1. the improvement is wise and practical and;
 2. the improvement is necessary enough that the Co-op will pay part or all of the cost.

If you wish to make an improvement to your unit, write a letter for permission to the Property Co-ordinator or the Board of Directors.

Plumbing Problems

Two Methods of Unclogging Drains

Slow or clogged drains constitute the biggest plumbing headache for anyone. People are very careless and throw garbage down the kitchen sink trap, residue collects on the walls of the pipes, and then the diameter closes in. Children revel in filling a toilet bowl with toilet paper; the result is an over flowing toilet. Any excess material thrown or dumped down a drain or toilet can get caught in the line and cause a blockage. The bend in a trap has a short radius and objects such as combs, toothbrushes, silverware etc. cannot pass through the pipe.

Usually a plunger will help clear a clogged drain line; however, if something the length of a spoon is dropped down a drain don't use a plunger. Instead call the Superintendent to remove it for you.

If you have been negligent about keeping the strainer for the kitchen sink in place, plenty of garbage probably has gone down the drain. The trap and drain pipes could become blocked from the continual addition of fats and coffee grinds to the drain. Grease tends to build up in the pipes, and coffee grinds, in turn, stick to the grease; several repetitions of this and the line will become stuffed.

A) Clearing a Slow Drain:

- 1) Remove any vegetable peelings, utensils, etc; sitting in the sink.
- 2) Lift out the strainer (that should be) sitting over the trap.
- 3) Put several pots of water on the stove to boil.
- 4) Wait until the water remaining in the sink empties.
- 5) Pour the hot water into the drain (be careful not to splash yourself).
- 6) If there was no tight blockage, the water should have dissolved some of the material sticking to the inside of the waste pipe and allowed the water to run freely through the line.
- 7) If steps 1-6 were successful, open the hot water tap and let it run for several minutes.

If the line is still sluggish, use a home made drain cleaner:

- 1) After the water has emptied from the sink, pour one cup of Baking Soda followed by one cup of Vinegar down the drain.

- 2) Immediately replace the strainer in the closed position or plug the opening with a wet cloth. The reaction of the bicarbonate of soda and acetic acid (vinegar) sets up a bubbly chemical action.
- 3) Leave the drain tightly covered for 15-20 minutes.
- 4) If the soda/vinegar succeeds in opening the pipe, continue to flush it by running hot tap water for several minutes.

B) Using a Plunger:

- 1) Clear the sink of all but a few inches of water.
- 2) Lift out the strainer.
- 3) Coat the rim of the plunger with petroleum jelly evenly. Set the cup of the plunger over the drain mouth, and with both hands on the handle, forcefully pump up and down several times.
- 4) If the water goes down the drain when the plunger is lifted from the top of the sink, replace the plunger and add more water. Repeat steps 1-3.
- 5) Follow by running hot tap water for several minutes.

Unclogging a Toilet

The toilet is thought, by many, to be a mysterious contraption. Considering that nearly half the water that is used in the average household flows through toilets, it is remarkable that these virtually automatic devices give such trouble-free service with so little attention.

If you have a clogged toilet follow these easy steps:

Using a Plunger:

- 1) If the clogged toilet bowl is full to the rim, empty out half its contents.
- 2) If the bowl is empty, add water up to the normal level.
- 3) Fit a rubber plunger, which has an extended lip to fit into the drain, over the large opening near the bottom of the bowl.
- 4) Pump ten (10) times with short, rapid strokes, then lift the plunger quickly.
- 5) If water rushes out you may have cleared the blockage; test by pouring in a pail of water.
- 6) If the plunger does not work, call the Superintendent.