

How Would You Know?

Warranties and other little known items

by Jim Bextermueller

Did you know if you use some method other than steam cleaning for your carpet your warranty may be voided?

What about applying tinted film to your windows? Usually voids the warranty as well. Did you purchase or were you provided a home warranty with your home? Have you tried to use it? What about that "lifetime warranty" the contractor included in the sales pitch to close the deal? So how do you sort out the fact from the fiction?

Let's start off dealing with the "lifetime warranty". First of all I coach the contractors in my network to not offer lifetime warranties because that is a long time to have to stand behind their work.

Providing the legal maximum, I believe of 10 years should be sufficient. Too many factors come into play over a lifetime that they have no control over. Think about it - the term is frequently used by companies but there is no standard definition for the term.

Therefore, the concept means something different to everyone. That works for the marketers exploiting the term, but not for you, the consumer.

A good place to start is what lifetime does the warranty cover? The purchaser's? The manufacturer's? The product's? The answer is, it depends. The duration and applicability of a lifetime warranty depends solely upon the person or company who is offering the warranty. A consumer's expectation of that warranty is completely irrelevant.

Home warranties can be tricky as well. Usually these days one is included in the transaction of purchasing a home. It has a deductible for each claim as well as limitations on what will be replaced and usually requires specific service people to do the work, not the people you might want. Make sure you read the fine print to know if an items replacement value is depreciated over the normal useful life of an item. That several thousand dollar furnace may not be covered if it is beyond its useful life. My mother had a warranty service for her retirement home at the cost of several hundred dollars per year. It gave her peace of mind but when her refrigerator needed to be replaced, they would only provide a white appliance. She needed stainless steel for which she had to pay extra. Economically it made more sense to save the annual premium and purchase new items when they fail. A

home warranty may be right for you. Just make sure you read all of the fine print before signing.

Product warranties can be just as tricky. They usually stipulate how something must be maintained to be covered. So how does the average homeowner know what to do? The key is to purchase quality items from reputable businesses so as to minimize the possibility of a warrant claim. If a claim does need to be filed, a reputable business will usually stand behind their work because their reputation is important. Remember the old saying, "You get what you pay for". Shopping purely on price usually brings problems. There is a local business called HomeServicesLink that screens contractors for homeowners checking background, insurance and monitors performance over many jobs to establish a longer term performance trend increasing your probability of a quality job.

HomeServicesLink, based in Madeira is owned and operated by Indian Hill resident Jim Bextermueller and has been in operation since he retired from Procter & Gamble in 2002. The business was awarded the 2010 Small Business Excellence Award for "10 Under 10" from the Cincinnati Regional Chamber of Commerce. The service is available to the general public and through several real estate firms for home buyers and sellers. It is also provided as an employee benefit to several large employers like Kroger, Trihealth, CCHMC, Dunnhumby and others.

HomeServicesLink also supports local green efforts by partnering with the Easter Seals Work Resource Center and their Building Value Resale Store. You can learn more about them at www.homeserviceslink.com or calling 513-271-1888.