



# Know Your Home

DECEMBER 2007

A GUIDE TO BELTS LANDING HOME OWNERS AND RENTERS

## Belts Landing Turning 15

Belt's Landing is almost 15 year old now, and some things are beginning to wear out. In the units, older water heaters could leak, causing damage to our own units as well as those of our neighbors....older heat pump/AC units may breakdown. These are signs that we all need to make a special effort to upkeep our building. While the condo association is taking care of common area concerns such as the roof and the drivet on the exterior walls, the appliances within our units are our own responsibility.

This guide is designed to help unit owners address the concerns within their units related to appliances and heating, cooling, plumbing and other systems, to avoid expensive problems. In addition, many unit owners have found that replacing aging appliances and other systems with newer, more energy efficient ones has

helped keep electricity costs down. In a communal living situation, we are all responsible to make sure that we take a preventative approach to replacing aging appliances before they become a problem and cause damage to our own and our neighbor's units.



If you're not already familiar with your appliances and their shut-offs please take a moment to familiarize. With a variety of floor plans within Belts Landing, each unit may have different locations for the shut-offs.

### Water Heaters

- If it's more than 10 years old, it should be replaced
- If leaving for extended time, consider turning off the water heater
- Consider periodically draining a small amount of water from the water heater. This reduces buildup of sediment in the bottom of the water heater. (Hint: A coffee can is great for bleeding off a small amount of water/sediment buildup)

### Heat Pumps/Air Conditioner Units (Inside & on the Roof)



Heat Pumps life span is approximately 8-10 years. If your's is older than 10 years it's not energy efficient and will probably soon stop working. It may already be icing up (often due to a lack of freon or dirty filter)

- Replace or clean your filter monthly (Hint: Leave a checklist on the Heat Pump/AC with date of last filter replacement)
- Have your Heat Pump serviced annually (Hint: Get on a service plan and they will service Heat Pump/AC units at the beginning of every heating & cooling season.
- Make sure that the area around the Heat Pump/AC unit is clear. There needs to be adequate ventilation for the unit to work properly.

*"In a communal living situation we are all responsible..."*

*Keep these things in mind:*

1. *If it's more than 10 years old, consider replacement.*
2. *Newer appliances are more energy efficient.*
3. *Have your appliances serviced on a regular basis to maintain peak performance*

If you should have an emergency in your unit:

1. If a fire, call 911 then call Belts Front Desk
2. Find your shut-off valve or circuit breaker and turn off the appliance or water source

**Belts Landing  
Condominium**

**960 Fell Street**

**Baltimore,  
Maryland 21231**

**410.327.5098**

## Toilets

- The original toilets in Belt's Landing have the 'floating ball' shutoff valve. Over time these become corroded and rusted and the ball breaks off. Consider replacing the shut-off valve and water flow valves with newer float cylinders. About \$20 for a "toilet repair kit" at home center stores. (Hint: Avoid using tablet cleaners which contain bleach – these will corrode your toilet valves and cause malfunction and flooding)
- Consider replacing the entire toilet with a newer, more efficient toilet. Newer toilets use much less water and have improved performance over the original toilets installed in Belts Landing.
- If you haven't used the toilet water shut-off in a while, test it out to make sure it has not rusted shut. If so, consider replacing the water shut-off valve at the same time as you install a new toilet or toilet repair kit.
- Have a "rocking toilet?" If your toilet doesn't sit tightly on the floor and "rocks" this can often be solved by inserting a couple of pennies or shim boards between the toilet base and the floor. A quick and easy fix for a common problem.



## Electricity

- Know where your main shut-off switch is located. It is typically found in a utility closet or room (depending on your unit's layout).
- Know where your circuit breaker panel is located. If the switches are not labeled, then make sure you label them as you discover what they connect.
- Have a battery operated flashlight handy. When the power goes out, you should be able to find it quickly & easily.

## Smoke Detectors

- Know the location of your smoke detector(s)
- Change the batteries every time you "Spring Forward" and "Fall Back" for daylight savings time. Have fresh 9-Volt batteries handy.
- If you hear a "beeping" sound from the smoke detector, that means that the battery is losing power. Change it with a fresh 9-Volt battery immediately.



## Water Issues

### Washers

- Consider replacing washing machine water hoses with newer mesh-protected hoses. The rubber on older hoses begins to rot and a cracked hose can cause you (and your downstairs neighbors) a lot of expense for water damage. Pressure on the hoses will often cause them to burst.
- Consider adding shut-off valves for the washer to avoid the pressure build-up which causes the hoses to burst.



### Refrigerator/Freezer Ice Makers

- Check your water fill tube to make sure that it is not kinked or broken.
- Check the connection between the fill tube and the refrigerator/freezer to make sure there are no leaks.

### Shut-off Valves

- Know the location of shut-off valves for kitchen and bathroom sinks.
- Know location of main water shut-off
- Tubs/Showers have no separate shut-off valves, so main shut-off must be used when problems arise
- Diverter Valves
- A number of the original diverter valves have failed and caused water damage in units. The original Briggs diverter valves should be replaced to avoid water damage

## Update Your Emergency Contact Information

- Be sure that the Front Desk has your emergency contact information including daytime and evening phone numbers.

## Keys to Your Unit



- You must leave a key to your unit with the Front Desk, in case of emergencies. These keys are secured and will only be used in situations if access to your unit is needed.

## Check Your Insurance

- Check your homeowners or renters insurance policy to see what it covers. (Water Damage, Smoke & Fire Damage, etc.)

## Using Qualified Contractors

- When having repairs done in your unit, be sure to hire contractors who are insured, bonded and licensed. Be sure to have your contractor drop off a copy of their license at the front desk. The front desk maintains a list of contractors that residents have used in the past.



## Homeowners Warranties

- The cost of replacing appliances can be significant. Consider checking into Home Warranties. Remember that deductibles and limitations do apply but the cost may outweigh the cost of appliance replacement.

## Contact Information:

**Belts Landing Front Desk:** 410.327.5098

**Village Management:** 410.323.1778 (George Bereska or Joe Gier)

**e-Mail for Village Management:** [gbereska@villagemanagement.net](mailto:gbereska@villagemanagement.net)

**Master Insurance Policy:** 301.855.5959

(Matt Boudreau/Nationwide Insurance Company)