

Welcome Home

ideas for living

650 • volume 29 • issue 03

How Long Should They Last?

All the components of your home—top to bottom, roof to furnace—have a life span, and it's good to know approximately how many years of service you can expect from them. This information can help you when buying or selling a home, budgeting for improvements, and deciding between repairing and replacing when problems arise.



In 2007, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) issued a "Study of Life Expectancy of Home Components." The report stresses that several factors influence life expectancies, including quality of installation, the level of maintenance, weather and climate conditions, and the intensity of use.

The NAHB study confirms that—as you may have suspected—the average life expectancy of some home components has decreased over the past few decades. (This explains why you're on your third washing machine while Grandma still has the same indestructible model you remember from childhood.) But there's good news, too: The life spans of some items have actually increased in recent years.

So here's a look at the average life spans of some common home components. These estimates incorporate information from the NAHB's report (which is itself based on information from a variety of industry sources), plus other home improvement experts.

Appliances. Of all home components, appliances have the widest variation in life spans. These are averages for all brands and models, and may represent the point at



Stacey Lange, Realtor®

Direct: 425.876.6164

staceylange@windermere.com

www.key2yourhome.net

This issue of *Welcome Home* explores how long you can expect some of the essential components in your home to last. You will also find tips on extending the life of your home's more expensive items, and information to help you decide whether extended warranties are worth the cost. There are so many important things for homeowners to know! As always, if you have any plans to buy or sell – or would simply like a current market evaluation of your home – please contact me.


Windermere
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continued on page 2

tips

extending their life span

Following this advice will help ensure longer life for some of your more expensive home components.

Roof. The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) recommends inspecting your roof every spring and fall; for their checklist, visit nrca.net/consumer/checkup.aspx. Wood-shingled roofs require specialized maintenance and can be damaged by improper care, so use a qualified company. To prevent damage from rats and other pests, keep trees and bushes trimmed to at least three feet away from the house, and if you see or hear evidence of rodents, place traps or call an exterminator right away. Finally, any dampness or discoloration in ceilings or walls should prompt an immediate call to a professional who can find and repair the leak.

Carpet. Extend the life span of your carpet by adopting a no-shoes-inside policy, and wipe off pets' paws before they enter the house. Vacuum heavily trafficked areas two to three times a week, and lighter areas once a week. The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) recommends a professional cleaning every 12 to 18 months; visit certifiedcleaners.org for CRI-certified companies near you.

Furnace and Air-Conditioning System. During the seasons when your system is running, inspect filters monthly and clean and/or replace them if needed. Ensure that nothing obstructs air intakes or vents, or otherwise impedes airflow. Since service companies are swamped with calls during the first severe cold snap or heat wave of the season, schedule a maintenance call in the off-season, before extreme weather arrives. Many companies offer discounts on preventive maintenance during their slower months. ♦

How Long Should They Last?

continued from page 1

which replacing is more cost-effective than repairing. Among major appliances, gas ranges have the longest life expectancy, at about 15 years. Electric ranges, standard-size refrigerators and clothes dryers last about 13 years; garbage disposals grind away for about 12; and washing machines and water heaters should last about 10 years. Dishwashers, microwave ovens and mini-refrigerators will all last about nine years. For furnaces, expect a life span of about 15 years for electric, 18 for gas, and 20 for oil-burning models. Central air-conditioning systems generally beat the heat for 10 to 15 years.

last about 15 years. Have we covered everything but the kitchen sink? Here you go: An enamel-coated steel sink will last five to 10 years; stainless will last at least 30 years; and slate, granite, soapstone and copper should endure 100 years or longer. Toilets can serve at least 50 years (parts such as the flush assembly and seat will likely need replacing), and bathroom faucets tend to last about 20 years.

Flooring. Natural flooring materials provide longevity as well as beauty: Wood, marble, slate and granite should all last 100 years or longer, and tile 75 to 100 years.



Kitchen and Bath Components. Countertops of wood, tile and natural stone will last a lifetime, while cultured marble will last about 20 years. The life span of laminate countertops depends greatly on use and can be 20 years or longer. Kitchen faucets generally

Laminate products will survive 15 to 25 years, linoleum about 25 years, and vinyl should endure for about 50 years. Carpet will last eight to 10 years on average, but the life span varies dramatically depending on use and maintenance.

Siding, Roofing, Windows. Brick siding normally lasts 100 years or longer, aluminum siding about 80 years, and stucco about 25 years. The life span of wood siding varies dramatically—from 10 to 100 years depending on the climate and level of maintenance. For roofs, slate or tile will last about 50 years, wood shingles can endure 25 to 30 years, metal will last about 25 years, and asphalt's got you covered for about 20 years. Unclad wood windows will last 30 years or longer, aluminum will last 15 to 20 years, and vinyl windows should keep their seals for 15 to 20 years.

Of course, none of these averages matter if you have a roof that was improperly installed or a dishwasher that was a lemon right off the assembly line. In these cases, early replacement may be the best choice. Conversely, many components will last longer than consumers need them to—as we often replace fully functional items for cosmetic reasons, out of a desire for more modern features, or as part of a quest to be more energy efficient.

Many household components will last longer than consumers need them to—as we often replace fully functional items for cosmetic reasons, out of a desire for more modern features, or as part of a quest to be more energy efficient.

But isn't it satisfying to know that your kitchen sink just might be the place where your great-grandchild has her first bath—and that *her* child might someday toddle along your hardwood floors? ♣

Home Pricing Guide: Following are average three-bedroom home sale prices for some of the neighborhoods served by Windermere. Figures are based on multiple listing data for homes sold July 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008. For information on other market areas, please call me.

Arizona

Phoenix	\$155,000
Prescott	\$182,000
Scottsdale	\$447,000
Tucson	\$191,000

California

Los Angeles	\$988,000
Palm Springs	\$422,000
Sacramento	\$140,000

Hawaii

Kona	\$499,000
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Idaho

Boise	\$236,000
Bonnors Ferry	\$188,000
Caldwell/Nampa	\$131,000
Coeur d'Alene	\$223,000
Driggs	\$277,000
Eagle	\$196,000
Hayden	\$230,000
Lewiston	\$157,000
Moscow	\$196,000
Post Falls	\$194,000
Priest River	\$219,000
Sandpoint	\$242,000
Schweitzer	\$484,000
Sun Valley-Hailey	\$352,000
Ketchum	\$1,955,000

Montana

Bozeman	\$416,000
Helena	\$158,000
Lakeside	\$705,000
Missoula	\$239,000
Polson	\$252,000
Ronan	\$197,000
Whitefish	\$658,000

Nevada

Las Vegas	\$187,000
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Oregon

Albany	\$195,000
Ashland	\$427,000
Astoria	\$257,000
Beaverton/Sunset Corridor	\$272,000
Bend	\$337,000
Boardman/Arlington	\$127,000
Canby	\$322,000
Cannon Beach	\$570,000
Clackamas	\$273,000
Clatskanie	\$219,000
Corvallis	\$259,000
Creswell	\$232,000
Dallas	\$208,000
Eagle Point	\$228,000
Eugene	\$247,000
Florence	\$211,000
Gearhart	\$305,000
Grants Pass	\$241,000
Gresham	\$269,000
Hillsboro	\$282,000
Hood River	\$383,000
Jacksonville	\$445,000
Klamath Falls	\$264,000
Lake Oswego	\$578,000
Lincoln City	\$369,000
Manzanita	\$454,000
McMinnville	\$233,000
Medford	\$223,000
Molalla	\$263,000
Monmouth	\$196,000

Oregon, continued

Newport	\$250,000
Portland	
North	\$374,000
Northeast	\$298,000
Southeast	\$299,000
West	\$403,000
Redmond	\$242,000
Salem	\$208,000
Salishan/Gleneden Beach	
	\$692,000
Sandy	\$263,000
Scappoose	\$257,000
Shady Cove	\$232,000
Springfield	\$194,000
St. Helens	\$185,000
The Dalles	\$195,000
West Linn	\$357,000
Wilsonville	\$345,000

Utah

Park City	\$476,000
Provo	\$195,000
St. George	\$254,000
Salt Lake City	\$235,000

Washington

Aberdeen	\$170,000
Allyn	\$287,000
Anacortes	\$418,000
Arlington	\$296,000
Auburn	\$288,000
Bainbridge Island	\$607,000
Belfair	\$206,000
Bellevue	\$582,000
Bellingham	\$323,000
Bingen/White Salmon	\$364,000
Blaine/Birch Bay	\$310,000
Bonney Lake	\$254,000
Bothell	\$368,000
Bremerton	\$244,000
Brewster	\$158,000
Burien	\$236,000
Camano Island	\$367,000
Camas	\$305,000
Cashmere	\$249,000
Cathlamet	\$222,000
Centralia	\$190,000
Chewelah	\$132,000
Clarkston	\$207,000
Cle Elum	\$564,000
Colville	\$164,000
Darrington	\$210,000
Dayton	\$99,000
Deer Park	\$186,000
Edmonds	\$422,000
Ellensburg	\$266,000
Enumclaw	\$321,000
Ephrata	\$150,000
Everett	\$309,000
Federal Way	\$302,000
Friday Harbor	\$641,000
Gig Harbor	\$373,000
Goldendale	\$210,000
Issaquah	\$507,000
Kent	\$289,000
Kettle Falls	\$169,000
Key Peninsula	\$267,000
Kingston	\$325,000
Kirkland	\$528,000
Lake Chelan	\$290,000
Lake Forest Park	\$475,000
Lake Stevens	\$293,000
Lake Tapps	\$488,000

Washington, continued

Lakewood	\$266,000
Leavenworth	\$428,000
Liberty Lake	\$322,000
Long Beach	\$217,000
Longview	\$202,000
Lopez Island	\$725,000
Lynden	\$284,000
Lynnwood	\$332,000
Maple Valley	\$333,000
Marysville	\$273,000
Mazama	\$346,000
Mercer Island	\$1,109,000
Mill Creek	\$409,000
Monroe	\$326,000
Moses Lake	\$176,000
Mount Vernon	\$274,000
Mukilteo	\$492,000
Ocean Shores	\$196,000
Olympia	\$290,000
Omak/Okanogan	\$186,000
Orcas Island	\$509,000
Oroville	\$176,000
Pacific Beach	\$705,000
Packwood	\$192,000
Port Angeles	\$236,000
Port Hadlock	\$176,000
Port Ludlow	\$381,000
Port Orchard	\$266,000
Port Townsend	\$364,000
Poulsbo	\$314,000
Pullman	\$204,000
Puyallup	\$253,000
Quilcene	\$840,000
Quincy	\$167,000
Redmond	\$525,000
Renton	\$357,000
Republic	\$182,000
Sammamish	\$562,000
Seattle	
Mid-City	\$476,000
Northeast	\$472,000
Northwest	\$628,000
Southeast	\$391,000
West	\$408,000
Sequim	\$380,000
Shelton	\$208,000
Shoreline	\$387,000
Silverdale	\$278,000
Snohomish	\$397,000
Spokane	\$215,000
Stanwood	\$321,000
Stevenson	\$230,000
Sumner	\$240,000
Tacoma	\$229,000
Tri-Cities	\$177,000
Twisp/Methow Valley	\$325,000
Vancouver	\$227,000
Vashon Island	\$665,000
Waitsburg	\$182,000
Walla Walla	\$221,000
Wenatchee	\$266,000
Westport	\$229,000
Whidbey Island	\$324,000
Woodinville	\$498,000
Woodland	\$256,000
Yakima	\$175,000
Yelm	\$222,000

Wyoming

Jackson Hole	\$1,300,000
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Stacey Lange, Realtor®

Direct: 425.876.6164
staceylange@windermere.com
www.key2yourhome.net

Windermere Real Estate/SBA, Inc.

13901 NE 175th Street Suite 100
Woodinville, WA 98072
425-483-5100

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Are Extended Warranties Warranted?



Extended warranties—also known as service contracts or service agreements—are sold for all types of household items, from appliances to electronics. They cover service calls and repairs for a specified time beyond the manufacturer's standard warranty. Essentially, warranty providers (manufacturers, retailers and outside companies) are betting that a product will be problem-free in the first years of operation, while the consumer who purchases a warranty is betting against its reliability.

José and Jacqueline, who live in Salt Lake City, Utah, do not purchase extended warranties. "We buy reliable brands from retailers who back up their products," José explains. "If we need repairs after the regular warranty period, they'll probably cost less than a service agreement. And if we buy a lemon, we hope it will be obvious early on, and we'll demand a replacement."

But for many people, peace of mind has a value. Brian, who lives in Eugene, Oregon, explains why he opted for an extended warranty: "I bought a washing machine for my mom, who is 73 and living on her own. I purchased it from a local appliance store known for its service. It's worth \$120 for me, knowing that if my mom has any problems over the next five years, she can call this local company and she won't pay anything."

Warranty providers make a lot of money on extended warranties, and Consumers Union, which publishes *Consumer Reports*, advises against purchasing them. To read their advice (including tips if you do buy one), visit consumerreports.org and in the search box, type: "why you don't need an extended warranty."