

# *How to spot trouble in hardwood*

In a comfortable home with slight humidity variation, wood flooring responds by expanding and contracting. These changes may be noticeable. During warm, humid weather, wood expands. During dry weather, wood contracts. This seasonal movement is a normal characteristic of wood flooring, and it never stops, regardless of the age of the wood. One of the best ways to ensure that wood flooring will give the performance homeowners

## *Working with humidity controls*

A homeowner who chooses hardwood flooring is making an investment in a floor that will last 40 years or more, they should protect that investment by **installing humidity controls**.

## *Cracks & separations*

Nearly every floor endures some separation between boards. In winter, when homes are heated and the air is dry, wood flooring gives up some of its moisture and therefore shrinks. When that happens, thin cracks appear between. This is normal, and homeowners should be forewarned of this. Once the indoor heat goes off in the spring, and the indoor environment regains moisture, most of these cracks will close up. Cracks in winter - in the drier months - may easily develop to the thickness of a dime (1/4 inch). Floors with light-stained woods and naturally light woods like maple tend to show cracks more than darker, wood-tone finished floors.

The cure for cracks? Homeowners should add moisture to the air during dry periods by installing a humidifier. If cracks are a concern, laminated flooring is a great option.

## *Cupping & crowning*

“Cupping and crowning” are common complaints that develop with high humidity.

Both problems occur across the width of the flooring material. Cupping is when the edges of a board are high and its center is lower. It can occur after water spills onto the floor and is absorbed by the wood, but high humidity is more often the cause. If the wood expands significantly, compression set can result as the boards are crushed together, deforming the boards at the edges. Cupping is caused by a moisture imbalance through the thickness of the wood: The wood is wetter on the bottom of the board than on the top. The moisture imbalance can be proven by taking moisture meter readings at different pin depths.

The first step in repairing a cupped floor is to identify and eliminate the moisture source.

