

Service contracts or insurance?

(AP) — Appliance dealers — sometimes in conjunction with manufacturers — routinely offer their customers service contracts. For a fee, which generally rises as the appliance gets older, the contractor will undertake to perform all repairs — either without additional charge or according to a specified schedule of charges.

How can you determine whether a service contract is right for you?

The key to your decision must be a clear understanding of the contract, including the fine print, combined with an evaluation of your own needs.

Here are some things to consider:

While a service contract may offer a way out of high repair costs, you should remember that you are buying a form of insurance.

AS WITH any insurance policy, a service contract is based upon mathematical probabilities. Not surprisingly, these tend to favor the contractor rather than the consumer.

If, for example, an all-inclusive one-year service contract on a new dishwasher costs \$50, you can assume that the contractor has based his price on the knowledge that the average appliance of that type requires considerably less than \$50 in repairs during its first year.

Nevertheless, there are often very good reasons to buy a contract. Things do go wrong with appliances, and you may decide that it's advisable to pay

a relatively modest sum to assure yourself that you will not be hit with an enormous bill.

But first, since all service contracts are not the same, examine the specifics of the contract carefully.

- Is the contract redundant? If you buy a service contract for an appliance at the same time you buy the appliance, you may find that many, if not all, of the items covered by the contract are also covered by the manufacturer's warranty. In that case, you would really be paying twice for the same protection.
- Is the contract all-inclusive? Some contracts allow an extra charge for labor but not for parts. Others may require you to pay for the repairman's travel time. And some contracts cover only a portion of the appliance, such as the motor in a washing machine or the heating elements in an electric range.
- Do not take the salesman's word for what a contract covers and excludes. Read the contract yourself.
- Does the contract offer preferential service, or is there an extra charge for speedy, seven-days-a-week repairs? A consumer with a service contract on his hot water heater may think he is entitled to free Sunday and holiday service only to discover that the fine print of the agreement allows a significant charge for such emergency calls.
- Does the cost of the contract rise significantly

with the age of the appliance? In most cases it does. The cost of a service contract during the first two years after an appliance is bought may be extremely modest, but this is also the time when minimal repairs are needed and warranties are in effect.

After that, the price of maintaining the contract may rise astronomically and by the time the appliance is five or six years old the cost of the contract may be prohibitive.

Some contractors may offer lower rates on older appliances if the contract has been in force since the item was purchased. This is something to ask about.

- Are you able to make minor repairs yourself? If a service contract only includes major elements of an appliance, it may still be worthwhile if you can make small repairs and adjustments. This is particularly true when the cost of a contract is adjusted according to the degree of service anticipated.

A home handyman who feels confident that he can deal with most contingencies may be wise to buy a contract that covers only major repair work.

- Can the contract be transferred? Some contracts apply only to the purchaser and cannot be assigned to others should ownership of the appliance be transferred. Similarly, contracts from local retailers may have no value if you move to a distant area or if the store owner goes bankrupt.

Fences can make good neighbors

A fence is the most popular form of boundary marker or garden screen because of its advantages over other methods of dividing plots of land.

A fence takes very little time to erect when compared with a wall or especially a hedge, which takes years to establish. Most fencing components are relatively lightweight and are therefore easy to transport and handle on-site.

In the short term, a fence is cheaper than a wall built of masonry, although one can argue that the cost of maintenance and replacement over a very long period eventually cancels out the saving in cost.

Wood does have a comparatively short life because it is susceptible to insect infestation and rot when exposed to the elements, but a fence will last for many years if it is treated regularly with a chemical preservative. In any case, if you are prepared to spend a little money on plastic and concrete components, you can erect a nearly maintenance-free fence.

WHEN YOU measure even a small garden, you will be surprised by the overall length of fencing required to surround your property, so it is worth considering the available options carefully to make sure that you invest your money in the kind of fence that will be most suitable.

Unless your priority is to keep neighborhood children or animals out of your garden, the amount of privacy afforded by a fence is likely to be your

Check the line of the boundaries to make certain that you do not encroach on neighbors' land.

most important consideration. There are a number of privacy options, but you may have to compromise to some extent if the fence would be exposed to strong prevailing winds.

In that case you will need a fence that will provide you a decent windbreak without offering such resistance that the posts will work loose within a couple of seasons due to constant buffeting by the wind.

In most communities, you can build any fence up

to 6 feet high without a zoning variance unless your boundary adjoins a highway, in which case permissible fence height may be limited.

IN ADDITION, there may be local restrictions on fencing if the land surrounding your house has been designed as an open-plan area. Even so, many authorities will permit low boundary markers such as ranch-style or post-and-rail fences.

At least discuss your plans with your neighbors, especially as you will require their permission to enter onto their properties, and it is always an advantage to work from both sides when erecting a fence.

Check the line of the boundaries to make certain that you do not encroach on neighbors' land. The fence posts should run along the boundary or on your side of the line. Before you dismantle an old fence, make sure it is yours to demolish.

If a neighbor is unwilling to replace an unsightly fence, or even to allow you to replace it at your expense, there is nothing to stop you from erecting another fence alongside as long as it is on your property.

New builder roles

Continued from Page 1

ers rely on stems from the manufacturers.

AUTOMATION and technology is becoming and will continue to become increasingly important in the building industry, Ahlwallin said.

"That is very true," Tobin said. "The house of today will be a dinosaur in the near future."

Smart house technology — the ability to integrate lighting, climate, entertainment, security and control by computer — is already here.

Wiring carries electricity and communications, but technology allows much more.

"You may not see it in the afford-

able homes for a while, but prices will come down."

Daniel Barton, president of D&J Development Property Development in Canton, said he sees technology making further changes. Foundations made from concrete and expanded polystyrene blocks, high strength/high insulation wall panels, and composite I-beams are just some of the things in limited use today.

"These products are in little use now but will become extremely popular in the next decade," he said. Builders will have to keep up on what products and technologies are going to be coming available to meet the demands of buyers who want the newest technology has to offer.

IT ISN'T EASY FINDING FARMINGTON HILLS MOST LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE

But The Glens of Coppercreek Is Worth The Effort.



Drive just a little bit further into the heart of Coppercreek and you'll discover these luxury detached condominiums that carry on a tradition of quality by master builders.

The Glens feature ranch or 2-story floorplans with first floor master bedroom, gourmet kitchens, high dramatic ceilings, security systems, wood burning fireplaces and a distinctive architectural look. Located on the golf course with easy access to everything, these luxuriously appointed homes feature golf course views as well as first distinctive models from which to choose. Visit today!

Price From \$239,900

FARMINGTON HILLS 489-9420

1-6 Daily Closed Thursday

Proudly Built in the Tradition of Quality by: Curtis Building Co. & Gerich Custom Homes

NOVI'S Westminister Village

MODELS OPEN

Starting at \$159,900

NOVI Schools • 354 Bedroom Single Family Homes Dramatic Cathedral Ceiling Library • 2 1/2 Baths

On Haggerty Rd. South of 10 Mile Open daily 12-6 except Thursday (313) 442-2626

ASPH Development

Bridgetown CONDOMINIUM

"LOCATED IN THE QUIANT VILLAGE OF CHELSEA"

1-94 to Chelsea exit, N. 1/2 mile to stop light, left 1 block.

Models open 7 days 12 noon-5 p.m.

(313) 475-7810

2-3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 2 car garage, full basement, central air, GE built-ins, deluxe floor covering, patio deck & more.

From \$99,900

Association dues: \$65.00 per month. Building last phase. Units available for immediate occupancy.

WILHELM & ASSOCIATES

(313) 625-8121

PRESENTS

LAKE ANGELUS CONVE



Newly Developed Prestigious All-sports Lakefront Community. Homes start at \$179,900. Come View Our Furnished Models Sit Down and Custom Design Your Own Lakefront Home Models Open Saturday & Sunday 1-7

Directions: Walton Blvd. to North on Clintonville to East on Lake Angelus Rd.

Valley Pointe

condominiums

PHASE II NOW OPEN



BEAT RISING RENTS - BUY NOW AND SAVE \$137 MOVES YOU IN* FROM \$68,500

2 BEDROOM - 2 BATH UNITS

Take advantage of mortgage interest and property tax deductions and build equity in your own home at the same time.

*Limited offer - Save over \$68,500 with \$1550 down payment. Mortgage balance of \$66,950. Payment of \$592.00 per month plus taxes and association fees. Approximate tax savings in the 28% tax bracket will be \$180.00 per month.

12-5 Daily 981-6550 (Closed Thursday)

SALES BY CENTURY 21, HARTFORD SOUTH, INC.

SHORES OF COMMERCE

CUSTOM BUILT LAKE ACCESS HOMES on Commerce Lake

Starting From \$149,900*



CONTEMPORARY AND TRADITIONAL STYLES 152' WATER FRONTAGE

Features include:

- 3 Bedrooms
- 2 1/2 Baths
- Full Basement
- Fully Carpeted
- 2 car attached Garage
- Family Room with large fireplace
- Kitchen with built-ins and eating area
- Energy Saving Furnace
- Full-size driveway
- Walled Lake Schools
- And much, much more

Brokers Welcome

Fixed Rate 9% 30 yrs. (points on model)

*\$149,900 model not shown

DEWITT

For more information call: 559-7300

MODEL OPEN Mon.-Fri. 1-6 Sat.-Sun. 1-5 (Closed Thursday) Call 353-4120

On The Water... BLUE HERON POINTE

Beachfront Cluster Homes in Northville Township



Crystal clear water for swimming, boating & fishing... a lifestyle you'd love to come home to!

Featuring spacious ranch and 2 story luxury homes with walkout lower levels and private decks patios overlooking calm water and sandy beaches.

from \$189,500

Lakefront \$199,500

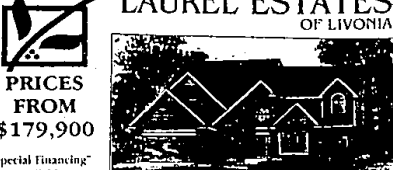
344-8808

Models Open Noon-6 pm

The Prudential

Harry S. Wolfe, REALTORS®

LAUREL ESTATES OF LIVONIA



PRICES FROM \$179,900

*Special Financing Available

Exciting Designs & Quality Construction by:

- Accent Builders, Inc.
- Benivenga Building Co., Inc.
- Roux and Associates, Inc.
- Italo American Building Co.

Decorated Models 464-8787

Hours: 1-6 Daily 12-6 Weekends CLOSED THURSDAY

OFFICES: 471-5660 474-5700 462-1660

For independently owned and operated members of the Prudential Real Estate System, Inc.

BROKERS WELCOME