

CHAPTER 327A

HOUSING; STATUTORY WARRANTIES

327A.01 Definitions.

327A.02 Statutory warranties.

327A.03 Exclusions.

327A.04 Waiver and modification limited.

327A.05 Remedies.

327A.06 Other warranties.

327A.07 Variations.

327A.08 Limitations.

327A.01 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. As used in sections 327A.01 to 327A.07, the terms in this section shall have the meanings assigned to them.

Subd. 2. "Building standards" means the structural, mechanical, electrical, and quality standards of the home building industry for the geographic area in which the dwelling is situated.

Subd. 3. "Dwelling" means a new building, not previously occupied, constructed for the purpose of habitation; but does not include appurtenant recreational facilities, detached garages, driveways, walkways, patios, boundary walls, retaining walls not necessary for the structural stability of the dwelling, landscaping, fences, nonpermanent construction materials, off-site improvements, and all other similar items.

Subd. 4. "Initial vendee" means a person who first contracts to purchase a dwelling from a vendor for the purpose of habitation and not for resale in the ordinary course of trade.

Subd. 5. "Major construction defect" means actual damage to the load-bearing portion of the dwelling or the home improvement, including damage due to subsidence, expansion or lateral movement of the soil, which affects the load-bearing function and which vitally affects or is imminently likely to vitally affect use of the dwelling or the home improvement for residential purposes. "Major construction defect" does not include damage due to movement of the soil caused by flood, earthquake or other natural disaster.

Subd. 6. "Vendee" means any purchaser of a dwelling and includes the initial vendee and any subsequent purchasers.

Subd. 7. "Vendor" means any person, firm or corporation which constructs dwellings for the purpose of sale, including the construction of dwellings on land owned by vendees.

Subd. 8. **Warranty date.** "Warranty date" means the date from and after which the statutory warranties provided in section 327A.02 shall be effective, and is the earliest of

- (a) The date of the initial vendee's first occupancy of the dwelling; or
- (b) The date on which the initial vendee takes legal or equitable title in the dwelling.

In the case of a home improvement, the warranty date is the date on which the home improvement work was completed.

Subd. 9. "Home improvement" means the repairing, remodeling, altering, converting or modernizing of, or adding to a residential building. For the purpose of this definition, residential building does not include appurtenant recreational facilities, detached garages, driveways, walkways, patios, boundary walls, retaining walls not necessary for the structural stability of the building, landscaping, fences, nonpermanent construction materials, off-site improvements, and all other similar items.

Subd. 10. "Home improvement contractor" means a person who is engaged in the business of home improvement either full time or part time, and who holds out to the public as having knowledge or skill peculiar to the business of home improvement.

Subd. 11. "Owner" means any person who owns a residential building on which home improvement work is performed, and includes any subsequent owner of the residential building.

History: 1977 c 65 s 1; 1981 c 119 s 1-5; 1986 c 444

327A.02 STATUTORY WARRANTIES.

Subdivision 1. **Warranties by vendors.** In every sale of a completed dwelling, and in every contract for the sale of a dwelling to be completed, the vendor shall warrant to the vendee that:

(a) During the one year period from and after the warranty date the dwelling shall be free from defects caused by faulty workmanship and defective materials due to non-compliance with building standards;

(b) During the two year period from and after the warranty date, the dwelling shall be free from defects caused by faulty installation of plumbing, electrical, heating, and cooling systems; and

(c) During the ten year period from and after the warranty date, the dwelling shall be free from major construction defects.

Subd. 2. **Warranties to survive passage of title.** The statutory warranties provided in this section shall survive the passing of legal or equitable title in the dwelling to the vendee.

Subd. 3. **Home improvement warranties.** (a) In a sale or in a contract for the sale of home improvement work involving major structural changes or additions to a residential building, the home improvement contractor shall warrant to the owner that:

(1) During the one-year period from and after the warranty date the home improvement shall be free from defects caused by faulty workmanship and defective materials due to noncompliance with building standards; and

(2) During the ten-year period from and after the warranty date the home improvement shall be free from major construction defects.

(b) In a sale or in a contract for the sale of home improvement work involving the installation of plumbing, electrical, heating or cooling systems, the home improvement contractor shall warrant to the owner that, during the two year period from and after the warranty date, the home improvement shall be free from defects caused by the faulty installation of the system or systems.

(c) In a sale or in a contract for the sale of any home improvement work not covered by paragraph (a) or (b), the home improvement contractor shall warrant to the owner that, during the one-year period from and after the warranty date, the home improvement shall be free from defects caused by faulty workmanship or defective materials due to noncompliance with building standards.

History: 1977 c 65 s 2; 1981 c 119 s 6

327A.03 EXCLUSIONS.

The liability of the vendor or the home improvement contractor under sections 327A.01 to 327A.07 is limited to the specific items set forth in sections 327A.01 to 327A.07 and does not extend to the following:

(a) Loss or damage not reported by the vendee or the owner to the vendor or the home improvement contractor in writing within six months after the vendee or the owner discovers or should have discovered the loss or damage;

(b) Loss or damage caused by defects in design, installation, or materials which the vendee or the owner supplied, installed, or directed to be installed;

(c) Secondary loss or damage such as personal injury or property damage;

(d) Loss or damage from normal wear and tear;

(e) Loss or damage from normal shrinkage caused by drying of the dwelling or the home improvement within tolerances of building standards;

(f) Loss or damage from dampness and condensation due to insufficient ventilation after occupancy;

(g) Loss or damage from negligence, improper maintenance or alteration of the dwelling or the home improvement by parties other than the vendor or the home improvement contractor;

(h) Loss or damage from changes in grading of the ground around the dwelling or the home improvement by parties other than the vendor or the home improvement contractor;

(i) Landscaping or insect loss or damage;

(j) Loss or damage from failure to maintain the dwelling or the home improvement in good repair;

(k) Loss or damage which the vendee or the owner, whenever feasible, has not taken timely action to minimize;

(l) Loss or damage which occurs after the dwelling or the home improvement is no longer used primarily as a residence;

(m) Accidental loss or damage usually described as acts of God, including, but not limited to: fire, explosion, smoke, water escape, windstorm, hail or lightning, falling trees, aircraft and vehicles, flood, and earthquake, except when the loss or damage is caused by failure to comply with building standards;

(n) Loss or damage from soil movement which is compensated by legislation or covered by insurance;

(o) Loss or damage due to soil conditions where construction is done upon lands owned by the vendee or the owner and obtained by the vendee or owner from a source independent of the vendor or the home improvement contractor;

(p) In the case of home improvement work, loss or damage due to defects in the existing structure and systems not caused by the home improvement.

History: 1977 c 65 s 3; 1981 c 119 s 7; 1986 c 444

327A.04 WAIVER AND MODIFICATION LIMITED.

Subdivision 1. Except as provided in subdivisions 2 and 3, the provisions of sections 327A.01 to 327A.07 cannot be waived or modified by contract or otherwise. Any agreement which purports to waive or modify the provisions of sections 327A.01 to 327A.07, except as provided in subdivisions 2 and 3 of this section, shall be void.

Subd. 2. At any time after a contract for the sale of a dwelling is entered into by and between a vendor and a vendee or a contract for home improvement work is entered into by and between a home improvement contractor and an owner, any of the statutory warranties provided for in section 327A.02 may be excluded or modified only by a written instrument, printed in bold face type of a minimum size of ten points, which is signed by the vendee or the owner and which sets forth in detail the warranty involved, the consent of the vendee or the owner, and the terms of the new agreement contained in the writing. No exclusion or modification shall be effective unless the vendor or the home improvement contractor provides substitute express warranties offering substantially the same protections to the vendee or the owner as the statutory warranties set forth in section 327A.02. Any modification or exclusion agreed to by vendee and vendor or the owner and home improvement contractor pursuant to this subdivision shall not require the approval of the commissioner of administration pursuant to section 327A.07.

Subd. 3. If a major construction defect is discovered prior to the sale of a dwelling, the statutory warranty set forth in section 327A.02, subdivision 1, clause (c) may be waived for the defect identified in the waiver instrument, after full oral disclosure of the specific defect, by an instrument which sets forth in detail: the specific defect; the difference between the value of the dwelling without the defect and the value of the dwelling with the defect, as determined and attested to by an independent appraiser, contractor, insurance adjuster, engineer or any other similarly knowledgeable person selected by the vendee; the price reduction; the date the construction was completed; the legal description of the dwelling; the consent of the vendee to the waiver; and the signatures of the vendee, the vendor, and two witnesses.

A single waiver agreed to pursuant to this subdivision may not apply to more than one major construction defect in a dwelling.

The waiver shall not be effective unless filed for recording with the county recorder or registrar of titles who shall file the waiver for record.

History: 1977 c 65 s 4; 1981 c 119 s 8

327A.05 REMEDIES.

Subdivision 1. **New home warranties.** Upon breach of any warranty imposed by section 327A.02, subdivision 1, the vendee shall have a cause of action against the vendor for damages arising out of the breach, or for specific performance. Damages shall be limited to:

- (a) The amount necessary to remedy the defect or breach; or
- (b) The difference between the value of the dwelling without the defect and the value of the dwelling with the defect.

Subd. 2. **Home improvement warranty.** Upon breach of any warranty imposed by section 327A.02, subdivision 3, the owner shall have a cause of action against the home improvement contractor for damages arising out of the breach, or for specific performance. Damages shall be limited to the amount necessary to remedy the defect or breach.

History: 1977 c 65 s 5; 1981 c 119 s 9

327A.06 OTHER WARRANTIES.

The statutory warranties provided for in section 327A.02 shall be in addition to all other warranties imposed by law or agreement. The remedies provided in section 327A.05 shall not be construed as limiting the remedies in any action not predicated upon breach of the statutory warranties imposed by section 327A.02.

History: 1977 c 65 s 6

327A.07 VARIATIONS.

The commissioner of administration may approve pursuant to sections 14.05 to 14.36, variations from the provisions of sections 327A.02 and 327A.03 if the warranty program of the vendor or the home improvement contractor requesting the variation offers at least substantially the same protections to the vendee or owner as provided by the statutory warranties set forth in section 327A.02.

History: 1977 c 65 s 7; 1981 c 119 s 10; 1982 c 424 s 130

327A.08 LIMITATIONS.

Notwithstanding any other provision of Laws 1981, chapter 119, sections 1 to 10:

(a) The terms of the home improvement warranties required by Laws 1981, chapter 119, sections 1 to 10 commence upon completion of the home improvement and the term shall not be required to be renewed or extended if the home improvement contractor performs additional improvements required by warranty;

(b) The home improvement warranties required by Laws 1981, chapter 119, sections 1 to 10 shall not include products or materials installed that are already covered by implied or written warranty; and

(c) The home improvement warranties required by Laws 1981, chapter 119, sections 1 to 10 are intended to be implied warranties imposing an affirmative obligation upon home improvement contractors, and Laws 1981, chapter 119, sections 1 to 10 do not require that written warranty instruments be created and conveyed to the owner.

History: 1981 c 119 s 11