



## The Perfectly Natural Movement of Wood Cabinet Doors

### The Effects of Heat and Humidity

Did you know a cabinet door could shrink, expand, or warp up to ¼" in response to air that is too moist or too dry? In a hot, muggy Summer, especially with the windows open to capture the ocean breeze, a wood door's frames and joints can expand, only to contract again in a few months when the wood stove is cranked up for a cold, dry Winter.

Cabinet manufacturers keep the factory air between 30% to 45% relative humidity. This is the best environment to build cabinetry that is consistently plumb, square and level, and not expanding, contracting and warping.

Then the adventure begins! From this controlled climate, new cabinets are moved onto an unheated, uncooled truck that could travel a thousand miles to a warehouse distribution center without humidity control. Then the cabinets are transported to a construction site where they may sit in the garage, or basement to await installation, where again, there is no climate or humidity control.

In some cases, once new cabinetry is installed, you may notice these variations:

- White lining on the edge of center panels
- Excessive gaps or overlapping of doors
- Open joints on door or cabinet frames
- Paint cracking or lifting
- Warped doors

Don't panic. Give the cabinets time – several weeks or months – to acclimate to their new temperature- and humidity-controlled environment and return to normal. Cabinet manufacturers require that cabinetry sit in a home for at least one heating-to-cooling (or cooling-to-heating) season before declaring a part defective and allowing a warranty replacement. A manufacturer's warranty will not apply to any product that has been exposed to unrealistic extremes in temperature or humidity.

### Steps Consumers Can Take to Protect Real Wood Furnishings

Wood is always moving. If indoor climate and humidity are not controlled doors will continue to move. Take special care in homes without air conditioning, heated with wood, or used only seasonally.

- Monitor humidity levels in the home, especially as seasons change. Reasonably accurate, inexpensive digital thermometer/hygrometers are available at hardware stores.
- Maintain humidity between 30% and 45%. Your home's HVAC system is probably sufficient unless you live in areas of excessively dry or moist air. Portable humidifier or whole-house humidifiers can assist in dry climates. Dehumidifiers can help in muggy climates.
- Kitchen cabinets should be treated the same as you would any fine furniture.
- If you live in an area of extremely high humidity, consider ordering MDF or HDF doors.

### Warped Doors

A warped door is rare. If a door appears to be warped, first try to correct by adjusting depth on the hinges. If this doesn't work, and the door has been hanging through a complete seasonal heating/cooling cycle since installed, test for warp. Remove the door from the cabinet and remove the decorative hardware and bumpers from the door. Lay the door on a flat surface. If the corners of the door are raised more than ¼" above the surface when the alternate corners are pressed, the door is considered warped.

### Installer Responsibilities

It is the installer's job to install cabinets square, plumb and level using shims to correct for any out-of-square walls. Racking occurs when a cabinet is forced out-of-square by improper installation. Any door, even a replacement door, can appear warped when installed on a racked cabinet. Correct the improper installation, then re-hang the original door. Adjust the hinges for proper alignment and allow the door time to acclimate.

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