

## **Ryan Homes buyers in Maryland say builder costing them thousands in repairs**

***Matthew Prenskey, Salisbury Daily Times***

***Published 1:33 pm ET October 31, 2019 Updated 10:45 am ET Nov. 1, 2019***

***From water damage to Ocean City condos to a Prince George's home built on an underground stream, complaints against company mount.***

On its website, national homebuilder NVR Inc. sells customers on the notion of "unparalleled" customer service and quality construction.

Homeowners in Maryland and other states say the company didn't deliver on that service.

A USA Today Network investigation shows that Ryan Homes, and its larger conglomerate NVR Inc., cut corners during construction and left homeowners to deal with the defects. When concerns were raised, homeowners say the company would ignore its warranties, refuse to fix the problem, leverage any repairs into nondisclosure agreements or force customers into lengthy fights, costing them thousands of dollars.

These issues stem from how Ryan Homes builds its homes, owners said.

Roger Williams, who owns a Ryan Homes-built condo in Ocean City, Maryland, said all 11 condo buildings in his association suffer from extensive water damage in each of the stairwells. The damage — once repaired by Ryan Homes but now has failed — could now cost homeowners an extra tens of thousands to repair.

"It makes me angry and it makes me sad. Angry that they are a multibillion-dollar company that markets itself (as) building world-class, quality homes, yet when we have a situation like we do here and we didn't get that quality end (result), they aren't willing to make good on it," Williams said.

In Maryland, [Delmarva Now](#) found Ryan Homes had the highest number of homebuilder complaints of any single builder in the three years since 2016, according to the Maryland Office of the Attorney General.



Buy Photo

Roger Williams, president of the ownership association at Sunset Island Condominiums, in Ocean City, Maryland talks about water damage/construction issues that they have had with the complex on Aug. 29, 2019. Here is some of the wood he has saved from the complex that has just rotted away. (Photo: Todd Dudek photo)

The office received 39 complaints about Ryan Homes since 2016 and 53 when including all complaints across the conglomerate of NVR's brands, according to the attorney general's office.

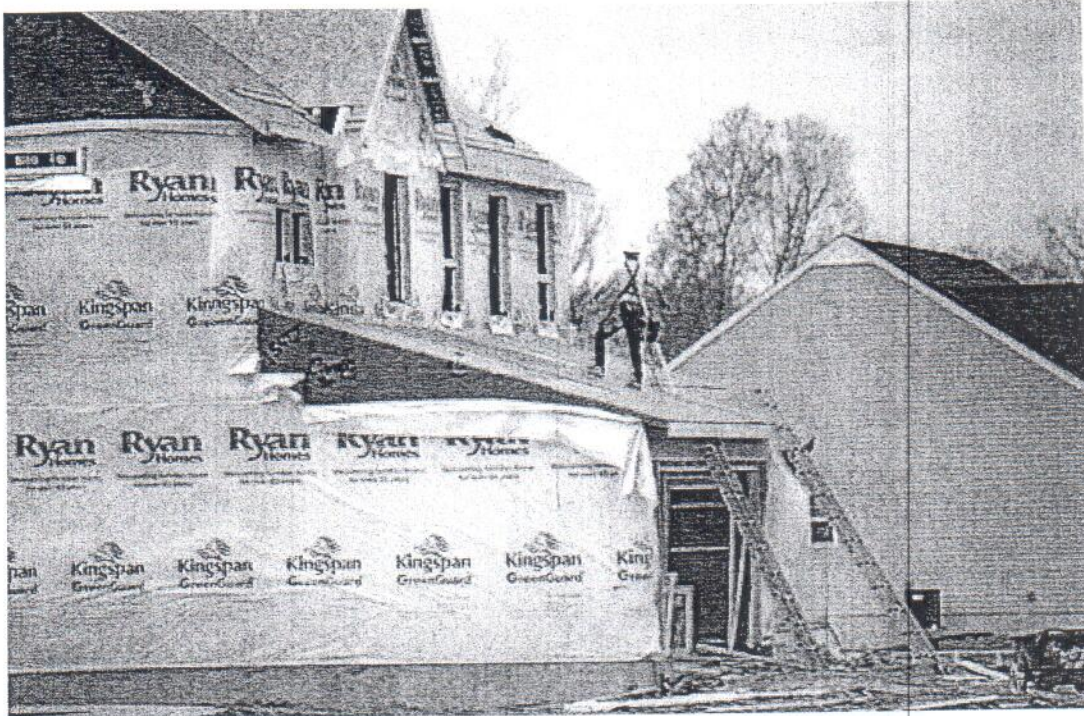
Such complaints stretch beyond Maryland.

In South Carolina, toilets weren't connected properly, leading to waste flowing under a woman's home. In Ohio, poor construction and botched repairs are forcing a family to live in a home that may not be structurally sound.

NVR Inc. declined to comment for this report. Curt McKay, vice president of business planning and investor relations at NVR, said it's the company's policy to not issue statements to the press.

## What is Ryan Homes?





Building continues on homes in the Ryan Homes Pine Bluff subdivision in Milford, Ohio. Ryan Homes has been in business since 1948 and operates in 14 states. It's a subsidiary of NVR, Inc. Mike and Tasha Amos purchased a home in this subdivision in late 2017. From the beginning, they say there were problems. The biggest issue are the floor joists that workmen cut to repair uneven flooring after they moved in. A private building inspector hired by the Amoses says the home is now structurally unstable and the family of five shouldn't be living there. Officials with Ryan Homes and its parent company declined comment. *(Photo: Liz Dufour/Cincinnati Enquirer)*

NVR Inc. is a conglomerate of three brands: Ryan Homes, NV Homes and Heartland Homes, according to company's [website](#).

The company is headquartered in Reston, Virginia, and builds houses, townhomes and condominiums in 32 metro areas and 14 states including Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and others, according to the company's website.

Ryan Homes advertises its one-year warranty for any material or workmanship defects along with a two-year warranty on mechanical defects and 10 years for any structural issues, according to the company's website.

"At Ryan Homes, we are proud of the care and quality built into each of our homes," according to some of the company's marketing materials. "We stand behind our homes and our warranty coverage provides our homeowners the peace of mind they expect."

## Ryan Homes issues across Maryland

What Williams experienced in his Ocean City condo is not an isolated experience.

In Prince George's County, Maryland, Aprile Belk said Ryan Homes built her home on an underground stream.

It took 15 years of working with Prince George's County and Ryan Homes to manage the water flow, and Belk said the homebuilder never admitted that there was a stream flowing under her home.

Angie Gray, who also lives in Prince George's County but in a Ryan Homes' townhome, said it took a letter from Congress for NVR to step in and fix the HVAC unit in her home. The unit was hooked up to her neighbor's home rather than hers.

The issue wasn't resolved for eight years. Gray said the defect cost her thousands of dollars, some of which she was never able to get back.

Representatives from NVR told her she should have noticed her HVAC unit was improperly installed.

"If I'm not the expert in that area, how would I know how to go look? This is a brand-new house so you're expecting that everything is going to be OK," Gray said.

Elsewhere, Veronica Stevens, a Ryan Homes' homeowner in Columbia, South Carolina, learned two of her toilets were not properly hooked to discharge pipes after hosting a Christmas party with 125 guests, many of whom used those bathrooms.

The Stevens' fought the company for more than a year before suing them. The case ended in a settlement that rewarded the couple more than \$100,000, but the Stevens' couldn't specify how much because of a nondisclosure agreement.

In Milford, Ohio, Michael and Tasha Amos moved into their new Ryan Homes' house with their two young children. Defects included uneven floors. The faulty repairs in which floor joists were cut caused the structural integrity of the home to come into question.

## In Ocean City, \$8 million in additional repairs for one HOA

In the case of Sunset Island in Ocean City, Maryland, the water damage is widespread, said Williams, who also serves as president of the condo association.

"Each building has stair towers on either end of the building and those stair towers are where most of the water infiltration deficiencies have occurred. So basically it's a matter of stripping off all the siding, getting to the water-damaged support columns and beams under



there, replacing them with pressure-treated members or other materials and sealing everything up tight," Williams said.



Buy Photo

Roger Williams, president of the ownership association at Sunset Island Condominiums in Ocean City, Maryland, talks about water damage/construction issues that they have had with the complex on Aug. 29, 2019. Previous leadership signed an agreement with NVR/Ryan Homes to fix the problems but there are still issues. Here is one of the buildings that is in the process of being fixed. (Photo: Todd Dudek photo)

When the condo association brought the issue to Ryan Homes years ago, it leveraged any repairs into the association signing a nondisclosure agreement. The agreement would have cleared the company of any future obligations, Williams said.

The association signed, but the repairs didn't last. When the issue came back, Williams said, the condo association again brought the problem to Ryan Homes. This time, the builder refused to make repairs, claiming it wasn't responsible.

Williams said condo owners in Sunset Island will now have to pay for the additional fixes themselves, a bill that will add onto the \$11,500 each homeowner had to pay.



"More recently to complete full repairs of the buildings, we've informed the owners that the cost is going to be in total \$8 million, which works out to be roughly \$40,000 (additionally) per homeowner to make these repairs," Williams said.

## What can be done to fix the problem?

In Maryland, homeowners are protected by the Home Builder Registration Act, which was passed in 2001, according to the attorney general's office. The law requires homebuilders to register with the state in order to build.

It also allows the Home Builder Registration Unit, under the attorney general's office, to enforce the law to make sure homebuilders are following all state laws.

Karen Valentine, director of the Home Builder Registration Unit, could not confirm if the office was taking any action against NVR.

As a policy, the attorney general's office doesn't "confirm or deny the existence of investigations," Aleithea Warmack, a deputy director communications for the Office of the Attorney General, wrote in an email.

One remedy Maryland homeowners may be able to use is the Home Builder Guaranty Fund, Valentine said. The program is funded by homebuilders and administrated by the attorney general's office.

"If at some point during the process they (the homeowner) has a problem — either the home is not finished, the build is not finished or there are defects or issues with particular aspects of the home after the consumer has moved in into the home — they can go to the (Home Builder) Guaranty Fund to hold the builder accountable for any acts or omissions by the builder that caused an actual loss to the consumer," Valentine said.

To date, Warmack said the Home Builder Guaranty Fund has paid out \$43,364.47 through mediation cases to NVR complainants.

In the meantime, Williams said NVR's actions weren't fair to him and the other Sunset Island residents.

"I really feel like we've been significantly misled ... when the problems were identified, Ryan (Homes) had a chance to make good on it and they refused to do it, so they really have us over a barrel," Williams said.

Williams, like other Ryan Homes homeowners, has complained to the Maryland attorney general's office.

Williams is working with the attorney general's office and members of the Legislature to try and remedy his current situation and prevent others from going through similar situations.

"I feel that it's unfair in the sense that me and the other 197 owners really have done nothing wrong," Williams said. "When anyone purchases a home that has been presumably built per code and inspected whether it be by the town or others, there's the assumption that it was built correctly."

*James Pilcher and Liz Dufour report from The Cincinnati Enquirer.*

*My name is Matthew Prensky and I serve as the Ocean City news reporter for Delmarva Now. My stories focus on business, government and community concerns for Ocean City and the rest of Worcester County. I keep doing what I do every day because of your support. If you subscribe, thank you. If not, and you want to see me unearth more stories, subscribe to Delmarva Now today.*