



Excelsior Fire District

Fire & Life Safety

Dryer Safety

Clothes Dryer Fire Prevention

Very few people realize the importance of clothes dryer fire prevention. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there are an estimated annual 15,500 fires, 10 deaths and 10 injuries due to clothes dryer fires. The financial costs come to nearly \$100,000,000 per year. Many of these fires can be prevented with maintenance, professional cleaning, and proper dryer venting.

Fire is not the only danger, several hundred people a year are also subjected to carbon monoxide poisoning from improper dryer vent setups.

How A Clothes Dryer Fire Occurs

Lint accumulation and reduced airflow in a dryer provide the perfect conditions to start a fire. Lint can build up and block the vents and clog up the motor. Limited air flow and blockage can cause the dryer to over heat. The heat gets hot enough to ignite lint that has accumulated in the lint trap, vents, motor, and ducts of the dryer. Lint is a highly combustible material and once ignited fire spreads rapidly.

Warning Signs

- If clothing is still damp at the end of a normal cycle or requires longer dryer times, this may be a sign that the exhaust or lint screen is blocked.
- If the clothes come out hotter than usual or if the vent hood flapper doesn't open, maintenance is needed.
- The presence of lint on and around your dryer, around the duct, on the walls and floors.
- Little to no air flow from the dryer vent on the exterior of your home.
- Laundry room feels warmer or more humid than normal.
- Unusual odors in your laundry area.

Clean the filter screen after each load!!! Make it a habit!

This will keep the vent clear and prevent the dryer from overheating. When a dryer overheats a fire can result. Even though your clothes dryer has a lint filter and you clean your lint trap out after every load, lint still escapes from the dryer into your dryer vent.

Keep the dryer vents clean and make sure they have been installed properly.

Have your dryer and the vents professionally cleaned annually. Make sure the company you hire can do an air flow test.

At least twice a year try to vacuum out your dryer vent from the back of the dryer all the way to where it vents to the outside. Vacuum out the dryer motor if it is accessible, vacuum the area where the lint trap inserts, around the base of the dryer, and behind the dryer.

Limit the distance, the sharp turns, and the bends in your dryer vent. Dryers have moved from their traditional location in the basement of homes into many different locations throughout the house, some dryer vents are harder to reach, have more bends, and have a longer distance to reach the outside, this creates more places for lint to gather. The ideal solution is to have short and straight dryer duct venting.

Mice, birds, and other animals can take up residence in the dryer vent or use it for food storage. These items can block your vent and also catch on fire.

Do not use Duct tape on your dryer vents! Duct tape is flammable and loses its ability to keep a seal when heated. Only use UL approved metal tape.

The use of the white vinyl flex pipe is all but completely prohibited, both by building departments and appliance manufacturers. It is important to know that even though you can buy items at a local store that does not mean the items are safe to use in all applications.

Stay at home while the dryer is in use.

Turn off your dryer before leaving your home

Install a smoke detector in your laundry room.

Many dryer fires occur while people are at home and many fire deaths due to dryer fires occur while people are sleeping at night.

Install a CO alarm in your home outside of sleeping areas.

Many people with good intentions install their CO alarm next to the most likely source of CO. This is in the laundry room by the dryer, the furnace, or by gas fueled appliances. The CO alarm needs to be where you and your family can hear it at night when they are asleep. The CO alarm will detect the poisonous gas and alert your family.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing CO or smoke alarms.

Take special care when drying clothes that have been soiled with volatile chemicals.

Gasoline, cooking oils, cleaning agents, or finishing oils, and stains can increase the chances of a dryer fire and can easily catch on fire in a dryer that is over heated. It is best to wash rags, clothing, and soiled items more than once to minimize the amount of volatile chemicals on them. It would be best to hang dry these items, if this is not possible use the lowest heat setting and a drying cycle that has a cool-down period at the end of the cycle. To prevent clothes from igniting after drying, do not leave the dried clothes in the dryer or piled in a laundry basket.

Never place a mop head in a dryer. Let all mop heads dry out naturally. The dryer's heat can ignite the cleaning chemical residue on mop heads.

Never use gasoline, paint removers or any flammable liquid to clean soiled rags, fabrics, or cloths.

Maintaining your dryer and having it inspected, tested and professionally cleaned has its benefits.

It will increase the life of your dryer by reducing unnecessary wear.

Reduce the amount of energy used drying clothing. A well maintained dryer reduces the amount of time needed to dry clothes, therefore saving you as much as \$20.00 or more a month.

On the green side, a dryer that is efficient is also better for the environment. A dryer consumes more energy in people's homes than any other appliance. The less time it takes to dry the less energy your dryer will use.

When you have your dryer cleaned ask the company if they can schedule your next recommended cleaning. Recommendations are to clean your vents out every year, but some dryers may require cleaning more often.

Here is an alphabetical list of some professional dryer companies used by local residents.

Centerpoint Energy
1-866- 959-0015
www.centerpointenergy.com

Dryer Vent Wizard
1-866-498-7233
www.dryerventwizard.com

Excelsior Appliance
952-474-7200

Lord of Lint
763-269-4151
www.lordoflint.com

Sears Home Services
1-866-993-8289
www.searshomeservices.com