

Safe Use of Household Clothes Dryers

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In 2011, clothes dryers were responsible for 168 of the 6,213 (or three per cent of) residential fires that occurred in Ontario. Fortunately, this number has been steadily declining over the past 15 years. Since 1997, there has been an overall reduction of 32 per cent in these incidents.

While the number of incidents has decreased, a consistent theme persists. The lack of dryer maintenance continues to be a leading cause, accounting for one in every three residential dryer fires. To raise awareness about the importance of dryer maintenance, homeowners are reminded to take the following precautions:

Installation / Maintenance

- Read the dryer manufacturer's instructions before installing the vent. Determine the straightest and most direct venting path to the outdoors to reduce the likelihood of lint accumulation in bends or elbows.
- The use of rigid or flexible metal ducting for venting to the outdoors is preferred over other duct products. Plastic or metal foil ducts are more prone to kinking, sagging and crushing, which leads to lint build up. Further, plastic ducting is also more prone to ignition and melting.
- Clothes dryers that are designed to be located in closet type spaces or totally enclosed rooms (e.g. in apartments) should have sufficient incoming air for proper operation (as specified in the manufacturer's instructions).
- It is extremely important to regularly remove the lint that accumulates in the lint screen, metal ducts and exhaust vent/hood. The inside of the dryer cabinet should be periodically cleaned as per manufacturer's instructions.

Do:

- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations in the Use & Care book regarding the safe use of the dryer.
- Inspect and clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry.
- Regularly inspect the air exhaust to ensure it is not restricted and the outdoor vent flap opens when the dryer is operating.
- Turn the dryer off if you leave home or when you go to bed.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in the laundry room if using a natural gas or propane dryer.
- Ensure there are working smoke alarms on every storey of the home and outside all sleeping areas.

Do Not:

- Exhaust the dryer indoors.
- Dry materials or fabrics that have been saturated by chemicals, oils or gasoline (e.g. mops and fabrics saturated with wax, flammable solvents or vegetable oils). Even after washing, these substances can ignite during the drying cycle.
- Dry natural or synthetic rubber, rubber coated sneakers, galoshes, foam pillows or any garment with foam padding (e.g., blouses with shoulder pads, bras, bicycle shorts).
- Dry garments that have been cleaned with dry-cleaning fluid.

“ONLY WORKING SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES”