

IT'S LAUNDRY DAY, CHECK YOUR CLOTHES DRYER

Periodic cleaning of your clothes dryer will reduce the risk of fire significantly

Sycamore, IL March 1, 2018 – Each year, firefighters across the US respond to approximately 14,600 fires directly associated with clothes dryers according to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association). One out of four fires is due to the buildup of lint, which means that lack of cleaning is more of a threat than a mechanical or electrical malfunction.

Many new dryers have built-in indicators that alert users of a blocked vent. Unfortunately, most of these indicators only sound when the vent is completely blocked with lint.

“Dryer fires are responsible for nine deaths, 420 civilian injuries, and \$22 million in property damage annually,” says Marty Ahrens, a spokesperson for the NFPA. These numbers are astonishing, and tend to peak in fall and winter months. The Sycamore Fire Department encourages residents to regularly follow these guidelines to prevent any possible clothes dryer fire.

Clean Your Lint Filter

Before (or after) every use, residents should remove lint from the dryer's lint screen. Not only does cleaning the lint filter prevent a fire, but it also helps your clothes dry faster and more efficiently.

Replace Accordion-Style Ducts

Dryers are generally equipped with a 4-inch vent on the back. The homeowners or installers will connect the exterior vent with ductwork. It is important to know that the style of ductwork is important. If a plastic or foil accordion-style duct is noticed in the back of the dryer, it may be a good idea to replace it.

Consumer Reports Test Engineer Emilio Gonzalez says, “These are risky because they can sag, allowing lint to build up at low points. The ridges on this style of duct can trap lint.” Gonzalez recommends the use of a metal duct, whether it is flexible or rigid, where the duct is less likely to sag and accumulate lint. Gonzalez also adds that the shortest possible length is recommended, per the user manual of the particular unit.

Inspect Vent and Exhaust Duct Periodically

If you are drying clothing and notice that it is taking longer than usual, this may be a clue that there is a blockage in the ductwork. It is also a good idea to take a look at the exhaust outside when a load has been started, to ensure proper ventilation.

Use Caution When Washing Stained Items

Clothes stained with flammable chemicals or substances, such as gas, cooking oil, cleaning agents, or paint thinners, need special care. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends washing the clothing more than once to minimize these volatile chemicals, and hanging the materials to air-dry. If a clothes dryer must be used, it is suggested to use the lowest heat settings that finish with a cool-down period.

The Sycamore Fire Department would like to instruct residents that experience a clothes dryer fire to keep the door closed, exit the residence, and immediately call 9-1-1. Leaving the door closed will keep the fire contained until firefighters arrive.

For more information on clothes dryer safety, please contact the Sycamore Fire Department at (815) 895-4514, or visit us on Facebook at City of Sycamore Fire Department for occasional postings.