Laundry Area Loss Prevention

Clothes Dryers

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that 15,500 fires associated with clothes dryers occur annually. These fires account for an average of 10 deaths and 310 injuries and more than $84 million in property damage annually.

Causes of Fires

What causes some clothes dryer fires? Lack of maintenance is leading contributing factor in approximately 30% of dryer fires. Other causes include mechanical failure (11 percent) and part failure, leaks, or breaks (10 percent) [1].

Lint traps are not cleaned as often as they should nor are vent systems checked and cleaned on aperiodic basis. Reduced airflow resulting from lint buildup in the screen or other areas around the dryer can cause the dryer to perform poorly, operate at elevated temperatures and possibly overheat.

Problems can also occur if consumers place improper items in their dryers, such as foam backed rugs or athletic shoes, or vent their appliances with plastic, vinyl or aluminum foil exhaust materials.

One Simple Solution

To achieve optimal airflow and reduce lint buildup, an all-metal dryer vent or duct is recommended. Rigid or flexible metal venting and ducting materials help sustain airflow, as well as reduce operating costs and extend the life of the dryer and clothing due to lower drying temperatures.

Additional Dryer Safety Tios

- Clean the lint filter in the dryer before or after each use because accumulated dust and lint can be a fire hazard. Also, remove accumulated lint around the drum and from the back of the dryer where lint can be trapped.
- Ensure that the dryer is plugged into an outlet suitable for its electrical needs.
- Do not operate the dryer without a lint filter.
- Make sure that the air exhaust vent pipe is not restricted and the outdoor vent flap will open when the dryer is operating. If you notice the drying time is longer, clean the vent system thoroughly to ensure proper airflow.
- Do not leave the dryer running if you go out, because if it malfunctions, no one will be there to avert possible disaster.
- Keep the dryer area clear of combustibles like boxes and clothing.
- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.

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Washing Machines

Washing machines are a significant source of water damage of flood damage in homes or institutions where they are used. Washing machine hose failures cause about $150 million in damage in the United States and Canada each year.

To reduce the chances that your hoses will fail:

- Install a braided stainless steel hoses. They a much less susceptible to bursting than ordinary washer hoses.
- Inspect your washing machine hoses regularly.
- Have water hammer arrestors installed to further reduce chances of washing machine hoses breaking. A water hammer arrestor can absorb the increased water pressure that comes when the electric valve in your washing machine shuts off.
- Secure the drain hose so it will not flip out of the drain hole.
- Turn off the water supply to the washing machine when it is not in use.

[1]U.S. Home Product Report, Appliances and Equipment, NFPA, Quincy, MA

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