

Washers & Dryers

Dryer and washing machines were involved in one out of every twenty-five home structure fires reported to U.S. fire departments in 1999-2002.

Facts and figures

- ✦ Dryers and washing machines were involved in an average of 13,300 home structure fires per year between 1999 and 2002. These fires caused an average of 10 deaths, 280 injuries and \$97 million in direct property damage per year.¹
- ✦ Clothes dryers and washing machines were involved in 4% of the home structure fires reported between 1999 and 2002.¹
- ✦ Clothes dryers accounted for 93% of the fires; washing machines 4%, and washer and dryer combinations accounted for 3%.¹
- ✦ The leading cause of home clothes dryer and washer fires was failure to clean (30%), followed by unclassified mechanical failure or malfunction (19%). Sixteen percent were caused by some type of electrical failure or short circuit.¹
- ✦ Almost one third (31%) of these fires started with the ignition of clothing. In one quarter (24%), dust, fiber, or lint was the first item ignited.¹

¹Source: NFPA's U.S. Home Product Report: Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires, November, 2005.

Washers

- ✦ Washing machines are a fire risk due to their high wattage, friction, motors and heat and lint buildup.
- ✦ Do not overload the washing machine.
- ✦ Be sure the washing machine is installed according to manufacturers directions or have an authorized service/repairperson install the machine.
- ✦ Be sure the drain hose/line is unobstructed.
- ✦ Ensure the water lines are connected securely.
- ✦ Ensure the washing machine is on it's own branch circuit.
- ✦ Install an automatic water valve shut-off in case of hose breakage or leakage.

Dryers

- ✦ Do not operate the dryer without a lint filter.
- ✦ Clean lint filters before or after each use.
- ✦ Remove accumulated lint from around the drum.
- ✦ Make sure the dryer is plugged into an receptacle suitable for its electrical needs as overloaded receptacles can cause blown fuses or tripped breakers.
- ✦ Turn off the dryer when leaving the home.
- ✦ Turn off the dryer before going to bed at night.

- ✚ Keep the dryer area clear of combustibles.
- ✚ Dryers should be installed & service by authorized service/repairpersons.
- ✚ Have gas-powered dryers inspected by a professional regularly to ensure that the gas line and connection are intact.

Dryer Vents

- ✚ Check your dryer vent and vent hose regularly for lint accumulation. Heat build-up could spark a fire in the hose or your dryer.
- ✚ Dryer vents should be made of rigid metal. Flexible plastic vents can be damaged by high heat, age and contact with other objects. Accordion type vents (metal or plastic) can crimp and are also more likely to trap lint.
- ✚ The vent should be run as short a distance as possible, yet never more than 25 feet, in a straight line.
- ✚ All vents should discharge directly to the home's exterior--never a crawl space, attic, garage, chimney or other room.
- ✚ Make sure you have a backdraft damper at the termination point

