



Dryer Vent Safety

Sweat the Small Stuff

You may not give a second thought to the ducts that funnel the moist, hot air and lint from your dryer to the outdoors, but you should. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that there were 15,600 fires associated with clothes dryers in 1998 (the most recent year for which data are available), accounting for about 20 deaths, 370 injuries, and more than \$75.4 million in property damage. Gas dryers pose another potential hazard to consumers: If they are not properly vented, carbon monoxide can be forced back into the home, causing illness or even death.

Heed these simple precautions to make sure that you don't become a statistic:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to vent your dryer properly.
- If you have a choice of where to install your dryer, position it so that the ductwork is short and free of twists and turns. That will minimize the risk of lint buildup inside the ductwork.
- No matter what the setup, use metal dryer ductwork. Rigid ducts are best, but flexible metal ductwork can be used where needed for turns. Never use foil or plastic ducts, which tend to kink and sag, creating pockets where lint or condensation can accumulate. Make sure the exhaust opening on the exterior of your house isn't blocked. If airflow from the dryer is



blocked either in the duct or at the opening, the dryer can overheat and cause a fire.

- Clean the dryer's lint filter after every use and have the ducts cleaned once a year, or more often if the dryer is heavily used. Instructions should be in the user's manual. You can hire a professional to do the job for you. If you do the job yourself, accessories such as long brushes and blowers can make it easier.

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Clothes Dryers and Washing Machines Fact Sheet

In 2006, an estimated 17,700 reported U.S. non-confined or confined home* structure fires involving clothes dryers or washing machines (including combination washer/dryers) resulted in an estimated:

- 15 civilian deaths
- 360 civilian injuries
- \$194 million in direct property damage

Leading Items First Ignited in Non-Confined Fires Involving Clothes Washer or Clothes Dryer, 2003-2006

Dryer	Fires	Washer	Fires
Clothing	30%	Wire or cable insulation	29%
Dust, fiber, or lint	27%	Appliance housing or casing	21%
Unclassified soft goods or clothing	10%	Drive or other belt	18%

- Most (81%) non-confined home structure fires involving washers or dryers began in a laundry room or area.
- Most of these home fires involve clothes dryers (92% in 2003-2006).
- The risk of fire is slightly higher for gas-fueled clothes dryers than for electric-powered clothes dryers.
- The leading cause (29% of fires) of home clothes dryer and washer fires was failure to clean.

*Homes are dwellings, duplexes, manufactured homes, apartments, townhouses, rowhouses, and condominiums.

Estimates are derived from the U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Version 5.0 and NFPA's annual fire department experience survey.