

# Dryer Vent Fire Hazard/Facts

Dryer vent exhaust fires now surpass creosote (chimney) fires in frequency on a national level. The Consumer Products Safety Commission reports that, on average, over 16,000 dryer fires killing 20 people, injuring 370 more and causing over \$97 million in property damage occur every year. According to the CPSC, in most of these cases the culprit was lint getting into the machine's heating element, sparking and fueling a fire. Not surprisingly, some fire departments and insurance companies now require that dryer vents be inspected and cleaned regularly.

Dryer fires usually start in the dryer when the motor overheats. Overheating can be caused by a build-up of lint in the duct that increases the drying time and blocks the flow of air. Since the duct is coated or even blocked with lint, a house fire can result.

With gas dryers, there is also concern of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Since lint and flue gases use the same avenue of exit from the house, a blocked vent can cause CO fumes to back up into the house. These fumes are colorless, odorless and they can be fatal. Low-level CO poisoning mimics flu symptoms (without the fever), headache, weakness, nausea, disorientation and deep fatigue. At higher levels, occupants can fall asleep, lapse into coma and die.

## **Warning signs of a dryer vent build-up:**

- It takes longer and longer to dry clothes, especially towels and jeans.
- Cloths are damp and hotter than usual at the end of the drying cycle.

## **Benefits to dryer vent cleaning:**

- Allows your dryer to operate more efficiently, using less energy and saving you money.
- Protects your dryer from excess wear and premature death.
- Helps cloths dry faster.
- Reduces excess household dust and humidity.
- Helps preserve clothing, as the life of many fabrics are damaged by excessive high heat
- PREVENTS A POSSIBLE DRYER FIRE.

## **Inspection frequency:**

Most vents should be cleaned every year.

Some dryer vents need attention more often.

Determining factors include:

- How heavily the dryer is used.
- How long the vent is. (Shorter vents usually blow better).
- Angles and materials used.
- The age and type of dryer and venting used.
- The design of the vent.

(Those with a lot of turns and elbows blow worse and build up more lint).

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