

# SafetyTIPS from Portland Fire & Rescue's Prevention Division

An information resource for citizens

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## Preventing Clothes Dryer Fires

Washing and drying laundry may very likely be a part of your everyday routine. A familiar fixture in the laundry room could be a real fire hazard, even if you're using it properly. Clothes dryer fires are one of the most common causes of house fires. According to Consumer Reports, each year over 15,000 fires start in the laundry room when lint from clothes dryers build up and catch fire.

A few simple safety tips you can help prevent a clothes dryer fire:

- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- Do not use the dryer without a lint filter.
- Keep the area around your dryer clear of things that can burn, like boxes, cleaning supplies and clothing, etc.
- Make sure you clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove lint that has collected around the drum.
- Do not restrict the air exhaust vent pipe and make sure that the outdoor vent flap is opening when the dryer is operating.
- Once a year, or more often if you notice that it is taking longer than normal for your clothes to dry, clean lint out of the vent pipe or have a dryer lint removal service do it for you.
- Keep dryers in good working order. Gas dryers should be inspected by a professional to make sure that the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.
- Make sure the right plug and outlet are used and that the machine is connected properly.
- Don't overload your dryer.
- Turn the dryer off if you leave home or when you go to bed.
- Clothes that have come in contact with flammable substances, like gasoline, paint thinner, or similar solvents should be laid outside to dry, then can be washed and dried as usual.
- Increased drying times are one of the best indicators of a dirty or clogged vent. If it takes more than one cycle to dry a load of clothes, especially jeans and towels, cleaning is most likely in order.
- One of the most important functions of a dryer is the elimination of moisture recovered during the heating of damp clothing. This moisture is held in the warm air produced by the dryer as humidity and is normally expelled to the outdoors through the dryer's vent. If this air cannot be adequately removed, poor drying will result. This moisture can also condense into pools of water in the dryer vent, eventually leaking out. Any

moisture accumulation inside the dryer ducting is a sign of poor venting which should be checked.

**PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY TODAY!**