

# Dryer Fire Safety

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), dryer fires are responsible for approximately 7 deaths, 344 civilian injuries, and \$233 million in property damage each year. Dryer fires involving commercial dryers have a 78% higher injury rate than residential dryer fires. The leading factor contributing to the ignition of fires involving clothes dryers is failure to clean, accounting for one-third of these fires. Fires involving clothes dryers usually started with the ignition of something that was being dried or was a byproduct (such as lint, dust, fibers) of drying.

Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions specific to your dryer and follow these simple safety tips to help prevent a potential fire caused by a clothes dryer.

## Cleaning and Maintenance

- Clean the lint filter regularly – ideally, before and after each load of laundry. Never use the dryer when the lint screen is missing.
- Clean the external exhaust vent at least annually. Make sure it's not restricted, and the outdoor vent flap will open when the dryer is operating.
- Have the dryer routinely serviced and inspected by a qualified professional. Gas dryers should have both the lines and connections inspected, checking for leaks and improper fittings.
- Keep the area around and on top of the dryer clean and free of clutter including any combustible objects like boxes, paper, chemicals, or anything else that acts as an accelerant to fires.
- Assign regular housekeeping of laundry areas and lint trap cleaning to an individual who's responsible for facility maintenance to ensure routine cleaning and maintenance is performed and documented.

## Installation and Use

- Have the dryer installed by a qualified professional.
- Make sure the proper electrical plug and outlet are used. Dryers should be properly grounded.
- The dryer exhaust pipe should be as short in length as allowable based on the location of your dryer. It should also be as straight as possible to allow for unrestricted airflow.
- Dryers should be vented with metal material, not plastic. The American Household Appliance Manufacturers Association (AHAM) recommends the use of rigid aluminum, spiral-wound, or steel duct aluminum flex hose. Foil type ducts can trap lint and are more susceptible to kinks or crushing.
- Never put any synthetic substances such as plastics, foams, rubber, or any pieces of cloth that may have been used to clean any potentially flammable or combustible liquids in the dryer, even if they've been thoroughly washed.
- Don't overload the dryer or run it unattended.

For more detailed information on proper laundry controls for materials that may have been used to clean any potentially flammable or combustible liquids, please refer to the Safety Summary, "Restaurants-Going Up in Flames."

