

## **SPRING CLEANING: CHECK CLOTHES DRYER VENTS**

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The State Fire Marshal's Office encourages homeowners to pay particular attention to lint build-up in clothes dryer vents and in the exhaust ducts.

"Often, lint build-up blocks the flow of air, causing excessive heat which can result in fires," said Raymond Lambert, North Dakota State Fire Marshal.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that 15,500 fires associated with clothes dryers occur annually. These fires account for an average of 10 deaths, 310 injuries and more than \$84.4 million in property damage annually.

To help prevent fires from occurring, Lambert recommends that homeowners:

- Clean the lint screen/filter before or after drying each load of clothes. If clothing is still damp at the end of a typical drying cycle or drying requires longer times than normal, this may be a sign that the lint screen or the exhaust duct is blocked.
- Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct periodically. Check the outside dryer vent while the dryer is operating to make sure exhaust air is escaping. If it is not, the vent or the exhaust duct may be blocked. To remove a blockage in the exhaust path, it may be necessary to disconnect the exhaust duct from the dryer. Remember to reconnect the ducting to the dryer and outside vent before using the dryer again.
- Clean behind the dryer, where lint can build up. Have a qualified service person clean the interior of the dryer chassis periodically to minimize the amount of lint accumulation. Keep the area around the dryer clean and free of clutter.
- Replace plastic or foil, accordion-type ducting material with rigid or corrugated semi-rigid metal duct. Most manufacturers specify the use of a rigid or corrugated semi-rigid metal duct, which provides maximum airflow. The flexible plastic or foil-type duct can more easily trap lint and is more susceptible to kinks or crushing, which can greatly reduce the airflow.

"Now is a great time to make sure your smoke alarms are in working order and to review your home escape plan so in the event of a fire, everyone in your household knows how to get out quickly and safely," said Lambert.

For added safety, many people are considering the installation of residential fire sprinkler systems, which actually stops the spread of fire, protecting lives and property.