

Keep Dryer Vents Clean, Clear

When my wife and I were married we remodeled and updated an older home. It was reinsulated, rewired, and made almost new again so naturally, we needed new appliances. We've had good luck with our major appliances in 10 years; so far, we've only had to replace the washing machine.

With a family of five, the washer and dryer get a pretty good workout. Last year we began to notice clothes were still damp when we pulled them out of the dryer. We adapted by adding another 20-30 minutes of drying time to remove the moisture. We went on like this for months, until one day in early December, the "Check Vent" indicator light appeared on the dryer's display. I knew the dryer needed to "breathe" and, based on the warm air coming out of the vent outside, things appeared fine to me.

I checked online and found that moist lint can stick to the walls of the dryer vent pipe, decreasing air flow and performance and, in some cases, cause fire. I searched for a solution and found a vent-cleaning kit called the LintEater. This kit consists of a brush specifically

designed to clean a 4-inch dryer vent pipe and several flexible rods for long runs of pipe. The rods can be attached to a power drill to spin the brush as it moves through the pipe, removing lint.

I attached the brush and began to clean, spinning the brush with the drill. We were amazed at how much lint was removed. I added more sections until finally, I reached the end of the vent. When I was finished I was left with a one square-foot pile of lint, three inches deep!

Clothes dryers can be energy hogs, especially when they are running inefficiently. Our dryer is equipped with a 5000 watt heat element; that means it uses 5 kilowatt-hours for every hour of runtime. That's about 50 cents an hour so, if I have to run two cycles to dry one load of due to inefficiency, that's about \$1 per load, and



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that adds up. Also, dryers create negative pressure in a home by pulling in air from inside the home and dumping it outside. This negative pressure pulls in unconditioned air from outside through the cracks and crevices that exist around doors and windows. The longer the dryer runs, the more the heating and air conditioning will run to compensate.

The fire hazard risk alone is enough to encourage anyone to keep a check on the dryer vent. According to the National Fire Protection Association, around 17,000 house fires are attributed to clothes dryers each year. So, for safety and efficiency, make sure your dryer vent is clean!

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