Home Repair Resource center

HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

DRYER VENTS

When was the last time you checked the vent hose on your clothes dryer? For most of us, it's something we never think about. We might remember to clean off the lint filter between loads, but seldom check the condition of the hose that it opens into. Yet, problems in the condition of that hose or the way it was installed can create dangerous conditions.

WHERE DOES THE HOSE VENT?

The first thing to check is where the hose is vented. It should run to the outside of the house. If the hose runs to another area inside the house, such as the attic, all that damp, moldy lint from drying clothes can accumulate and cause damage to plaster and framing.

> **GAS DRYERS MUST VENT OUTSIDE**
>
> Even worse is having a gas dryer that is not vented outside. This can be a lethal situation; all the moisture, lint, and exhaust gases produced by the dryer will be blown directly into the basement – a mixture of airborne pollution, mold and carbon monoxide.

WHAT IS THE VENT HOSE MADE OF?

Next, look at the material used for the vent hose. A recent Consumer Reports™ article states that there are 15,000 dryer fires each year. One culprit involved in these fires is the use of plastic vent hose. The wire ribbing in the hose slows down the airflow and eventually collects lint – which, in turn, slows down the exhaust even further. The lint blows around the inside of the dryer housing, where it can make contact with the heating section and ignite.

In addition to creating a fire hazard, in gas dryers the lint build-up in a plastic vent hose can prevent combustion gases, like carbon monoxide, from being vented efficiently to the outside of the house. While electric dryers do not discharge combustion gases, there are glowing hot heating elements (much like those in a toaster) that can ignite lint build-up in the machine.

An accumulation of lint also wastes energy. When the moist exhaust cannot flow freely to the outside, it takes longer to dry each load of clothing.

In many communities, building departments have banned the use of plastic vent hose on gas or electric dryers. What should be used instead is rigid sectional vent pipe (aluminum or galvanized steel) or a corrugated metal vent hose.

USE INSTEAD OF PLASTIC	WHY
Corrugated metal vent hose	A smoother interior that doesn't collect the lint as quickly as plastic hose does.

Rigid sectional vent pipe (aluminum or galvanized steel)	Also smooth inside, and sectional pipe doesn't crush as readily as corrugated tubing. (Sectional vent pipe should be assembled with the crimped ends pointing towards the outside and with each section secured with sheet-metal screws, so they don't vibrate apart.)

KEEP IT CLEAN

1. Clean the lint filter before every load.
2. In addition, a couple of times a year, remove the vent pipe from the dryer, inspect it for lint build-up, and clean it if necessary.
3. Where the hose exits outside the house, make sure that the vent hood is protected from squirrels or birds building nests. Replacement vent hoods with a cage are available to stop the critters from nesting there, but you'll still need to check it weekly for lint blockage.

With this little added precaution, your dryer should function safely and efficiently.

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Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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