

Get the best from your washers and dryers

By Don McGonagil
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This is the second article in a series.

Front loading a good bet

Clothes washers utilize mechanical action, chemical action and temperature to clean clothes. High efficiency laundry means using less water, less detergent and higher spin speeds that remove more water from the clothes before drying, using less energy. Higher end, front end loading clothes washers do not agitate and have more capacity. Front loading machines are the most efficient, and actually clean clothes more effectively with less wear and tear.

According to Deborah Warner, industry expert and sales consultant with A-1 Appliance (5410 Harding Road, 352-5174, www.a1appliance.com), "Different temperature cycles are used depending on the fabrics to be cleaned, and the detergent or chemicals used during the wash cycle. Using cold water during the wash cycle may save some energy, but may not clean your clothes as well because higher water temperatures trigger the release of chemicals in many detergents designed to clean fabrics, whiten whites and attack stains. Follow manufacturers' guidelines on all clothing labels and use the highest temperature recommended during the wash, and rinse cycle for your garments to increase cleaning effectiveness."



Go sensor with dryers

Clothes dryers have several drying options. The least efficient cycle is timed drying, allowing the machine to continue running after clothes have completely dried. Automatic drying measures the temperature of air, leaving the dryer to adjust the drying clock and move the cycle forward. The temperature rises as moisture is reduced. Sensor drying is the most efficient, measuring the moisture content of the clothes during the drying cycle.

"Sort clothes by similar fabrics when sensor drying to ensure consistency and thoroughness," Warner adds. "Fabrics like denim jeans and thick cotton towels may require more drying time than bed sheets or polyester blend fabrics. Always remove lint and clean your filter before every load to increase your dryer efficiency and avoid dryer fire hazards."

Lint: A household pyro

According to the United States Consumer Products Safety Commission, there are nearly 20,000 residential fires reported and responded to by fire departments where the source of the fire was the clothes dryer or vent. Each year, these fires cause more than \$100 million in damage, hundreds of civilian injuries, and dozens of civilian deaths.

What causes clothes dryer fires? Lint buildup inside the exhaust duct reduces air flow and causes more lint to collect on the backside of the dryer drum, on the dryer motor or on the electrical connections inside the dryer — placing the highly combustible lint on top of and adjacent to heat sources inside the dryer.

What can a homeowner do? Using the right type of exhaust pipe is the first step in reducing lint buildup. The plastic coated flexible wire or aluminum foil ducts typically used to exhaust heated air from clothes dryers can create a dangerous fire hazard if not inspected regularly and kept clean of lint. The ribbed surface inside can slow air movement and collect lint.

Consider using sheet metal vent pipes. Sheet metal vent ducts are more fire resistant and can help contain a fire should one start. To facilitate airflow, the exhaust pipe should be as short as possible and have a limited number of bends.

When designing your home or locating the clothes dryer, place it near an outside wall. Not only will you be reducing the chances of a dryer fire, but this should result in faster drying times and energy savings also.

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