

April Safety Theme:

## DON'T FORGET TO CLEAN DRYER VENTS DURING SPRING CLEANING

The South Carolina State Fire Marshal's Office encourages citizens to pay particular attention to lint build-up in clothes dryer vents and in the exhaust ducts. "Oftentimes, lint build-up blocks the flow of air, causing excessive heat which can result in fires", says State Fire Marshal John Reich with the Division of Fire and Life Safety. In 2002, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission reported that clothes dryers were associated with 15,600 fires, resulting in 20 deaths and 370 injuries.

To help prevent fires from occurring:

- **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.
- **Take special care when drying clothes that have been soiled with volatile chemicals** such as gasoline, cooking oils, cleaning agents, or finishing oils and stains. If possible, wash the clothing more than once to minimize the amount of volatile chemicals on the clothes and, preferably, hang the clothes to dry. If using a dryer, use the lowest heat setting and a drying cycle that has a cool-down period at the end of the cycle. To prevent clothes from igniting after drying, do not leave the dried clothes in the dryer or piled in a laundry basket.

Now is a great time to make sure your smoke alarms are in working order and to review your home escape plan so that if in the event of a fire, everyone in your

household knows how to get out quickly and safely. “In today’s times of modern technology, many people are also looking towards taking advantage of residential sprinkler systems. These systems are designed to put the fire out before it can become a problem and is a relatively inexpensive way to provide and even greater safety environment for your family”, adds **Mr. Reich**.