

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Clothes Dryer Safety

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Doing laundry is most likely part of your regular routine. However when lint builds up in a dryer vent, this can sometimes cause a fire. According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#), dryer fires account for roughly 13,820 home structure fires per year, with seven deaths, 344 injuries, and over \$200 million in damage each year.

Because of the incidence of dryer fires, the Fire Code requires dryers to be properly installed and maintained, their exhaust vents to be properly cleaned (2021 Seattle Fire Code, Section 610).

Here are simple safety tips you can use to help prevent a clothes dryer fire.

Installation

- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- Dryers should be properly grounded.
- Use venting material made from metal and ensure the venting is not too long and does not have significant curves— follow the manufacturer's instructions.

How to Use a Dryer Safely

The leading cause of home clothes dryer fires is failure to clean them.

- Clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove lint that has collected around the drum.
- Make sure the air exhaust vent pipe is not restricted and the outdoor vent flap will open when the dryer is operating. Once a year, or more often if you notice that it is taking longer than normal for your clothes to dry, clean lint out of the

vent pipe or have a dryer lint removal service do it for you.

In addition to cleaning your dryer lint trap and vent, there are other steps you can take to help prevent a dryer

- Keep dryers in good working order. Gas dryers should be inspected by a qualified professional to make sure that the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.
- Make sure the right plug and outlet are used and that the machine is connected properly.
- Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Clothes that have come in contact with flammable substances, like gasoline, paint thinner, or similar solvents should be laid outside to dry, then can be washed and dried as usual.
- Turn the dryer off if you leave home or when you go to bed.

Things to Avoid

- Do not use the dryer without a lint filter.
- Do not overload your dryer.
- Do not leave your dryer on if you leave home or when you go to bed.



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The leading information and knowledge resource
on fire, electrical and related hazards

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