



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Are Dirty Vents a Fire Hazard?

Are clogged clothes dryer vents a fire hazard?

A plugged dryer duct system will certainly cause a dryer to run hotter and increase the chance that something could catch fire. Dryer lint can accumulate at the outdoor hood bird screen, along the length of the duct, at duct fittings and at the dryer lint screen itself. Dryer venting systems can also become clogged if the dryer hose is crimped behind the dryer or the dryer duct is crushed or otherwise damaged during installation. A blocked, or partially blocked venting system, however, is only one link in a chain of events that must occur for a fire to start. Other events may include: failure of thermostat and limit switches in the dryer, lint inside the dryer, a missing or a damaged lint screen.

The risk of dryer vent fires can be limited by ensuring that the dryer vent length (including allowances for elbows, transitions and outdoor hood assemblies) does not exceed the dryer manufacturer's recommendations. If it does, it may be necessary to install a dryer vent system booster fan. Regular inspection and cleaning of dryer lint screens, and the dryer duct and outdoor hood bird screen will also prevent lint build up and will keep the dryer running as effectively and efficiently as possible.

It is possible to detect dryer vent problems before they become fire hazards. Increased clothes drying times and frequent clothes dryer deactivation during duty cycles (due to the tripping of the high temperature limit switch), heat and humidity build-up in the area around the dryer are the key indicators of dryer venting problems.

