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*Wednesday, October 21, 1998*

## Consumers vent their concerns about dryer fires

Last modified at 5:58 a.m. on Wednesday, October 21, 1998

**ANN LANDERS**  
*Columnist*

Dear Ann Landers: I'm writing about your recent column regarding clothes-dryer vents and fires. Ann, my husband and I have a company that specializes in cleaning dryer vents, so I am more than familiar with the dangers.

Clothes dryers start more residential fires than any other appliance. The Consumer Products Safety Commission estimates that there are over 24,000 dryer fires each year in the United States, causing over \$96 million in property damages. Lack of vent maintenance is the leading cause of dryer fires, and lint, which is a hidden fire hazard, is the material most likely to ignite. Even a cleaned lint screen traps only 75 percent of the lint. When lint builds up in dryer vents, the dryer motor has to labor harder and can overheat, igniting the lint.

It isn't just clothes-dryer vent hoses that need to be checked, Ann. Clogged lint-screen compartments, disconnected or ripped dryer-vent hoses, smashed hoses behind the clothes dryer, bird nests in dryer vents, poor dryer-vent design, screens placed over the exhaust point, use of white plastic vent hoses instead of aluminum foil ones, building defects, wrong exhaust hoods -- all produce the same blockage, and all cause dryer fires. All these fires are preventable.

-- S.S. in Oceanside, Calif.

Dear Oceanside: The word is out -- thanks to you. Since I don't know much about clothes dryers, I

was unaware of this hazard. I now know a lot more than I did. Read on:

From Green Bay, Wis.: Recently, you had an article from a reader about how the lint from clothes dryers could start a fire. When I read that, I asked my husband to check the vent hoses. He reluctantly said, "I'll get to it tomorrow."

Thank God I was home because the lint in the dryer caught fire before my husband ever got to it. I couldn't believe it was happening. Waiting that extra day was almost too late for us. Please tell your readers to get the lint out of their dryers and vent hoses TODAY.

Independence, Mo.: My husband and I are very thankful to the reader who shared her problem about clogged dryer vents. When my husband read that column to me, I decided to check our dryer. I pulled out the hose and, much to my surprise, found it was ripped and brimming with lint. We were wondering why it took three cycles before our clothes were even partially dry.

Orlando, Fla.: Bless you for printing that information about dryer vents. For months, my clothes had been taking longer and longer to dry. After reading that column, I decided to check the vent. Not only was it clogged with lint, but the flap at the end was stuck in an almost-closed position. I am grateful to that reader not only for helping me avoid a fire but for a lower electric bill.

Feeling pressured to have sex? How well-informed are you? Write for Ann Landers' booklet "Sex and the Teenager." Send a self-addressed, long, business-size envelope and a check or money order for \$3.75 to: Teens, c/o Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11562, Chicago, Ill. 60611-0562.

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