

Why You Need To Have Your Dryer Vent Cleaned

Let's focus on why cleaning our dryer vents is necessary. There has been a steady increase in the occurrence of dryer fires over the last decade according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and US Fire Administration. A bit of history is required to see why this is occurring. Since approximately the 1980's architects have started designing our homes differently looking at our "modern" busy family and putting the laundry rooms inside our homes away from exterior walls. This move was seen as a convenient way for families to do laundry with the washer and dryer located inside the home where the dirty clothes are. However, this move while convenient created a fire hazard that was not intended. With the move of the dryer inside of the house and needing to be vented to the exterior of the home long runs for the dryer vents were required.

The long dryer vent runs created several problems that were not really thought through. First is the obvious reason and why your reading this article, the buildup of dryer lint. Pull the lint screen from your clothes dryer and see how small the holes actually are you might get an idea of how this stuff can build up quickly. When we dry our clothes small fibers come off of them and flow through the dryer of which some are caught on the lint screen. However, the lint screen only catches approximately 40% to 60% of the lint leaving the rest to flow out of the dryer into the vent system. These tiny particles of fiber start drying out as soon as they leave our clothes and once dry float on the air system until they are either blow out of the house or land somewhere inside of the vent usually bonding with more lint. With the hot moist air from the dryer the lint starts to gather at certain places inside the vent and build up forming restrictions on the air flow. Any restriction or reduction in the airflow causes more lint to start gathering inside of the vent. So you can see the pattern of lint building up over time.

As we discussed the air flow restrictions caused by the buildup of lint is how the vent gets clogged. As this happens our dryers start to work harder to get the clothes dry. We notice this as the drying times gradually increase until we get used to running the dryer continuously just to get our laundry dry. Finally with the dryer overheating there are one of two outcomes. The dryer fails and needs to be repaired (see below for more information) or the lint gets ignited. The latter of the two outcomes is the most feared, by myself and most homeowners.

Cleaning our dryer vents is necessary and should be done on a yearly basis. I know many customers and myself wondered that if the dryer vent had not been cleaned for many years why should it be done now on a yearly basis? The answer is the vent itself which starts to rust over time. The rust inside the vent gathers lint more quickly than a new vent would. I am always surprised at just how much lint I removed from my own vent each year. The benefits of having an annual cleaning far outweigh the cost from a professional dryer vent cleaning company