

Home Tips Everyone Can Use By Lou Prinzi, CRI/RPI

Does your clothes dryer take longer to dry clothes now than when it was new? It may be a clogged dryer vent.

Question: What is the proper way to vent a clothes dryer?

Answer: In some new homes, washers and dryers are placed in nontraditional areas of the house, including upstairs bedrooms, hallways and closets. This new site generally require longer dryer vents in order to reach an outside wall and may contain sharp turns and bends that snake through the home. A good portion of homes I've inspected have the vent going up through the attic.

Per Florida Building Code, dryer vents cannot be longer than the equivalent of 25 feet. Below is some information taken from the Mechanical Section of the 2007 Florida Building Code. You can read the entire code section by going to <http://publicecodes.citation.com/st/fl/st/b1100v07/index.htm>.

504.4 Exhaust installation. Dryer exhaust ducts for clothes dryers shall terminate on the outside of the building and shall be equipped with a backdraft damper. Screens shall not be installed at the duct termination. Clothes dryer transition ducts used to connect the appliance to the exhaust duct system shall be limited to single lengths not to exceed 8 feet in length and shall be listed and labeled for the application. Transition ducts shall not be concealed within construction.

504.6 Domestic clothes dryer ducts. Exhaust ducts for domestic clothes dryers shall have a smooth interior finish and the maximum developed length shall not exceed 25 feet from the dryer location to the outlet terminal. The maximum length of the duct shall be reduced 2 1/2 feet for each 45-degree bend and 5 feet for each 90-degree bend.

Lint can accumulate in pockets along the vent where it is harder to reach and clean. As a result, it is crucial for homeowners to regularly inspect and clean out the dryer vent. In fact, all manufacturers now state in their manuals not to use plastic flexible dryer ducts (transition ducts) between the vent and the clothes dryer. The plastic itself can provide additional fuel for a fire. Even flexible foil vents are not the best choice since they can sag, allowing lint to build up and catch on fire if it comes in contact with a sufficient amount of heat. If a fire starts beneath the dryer when the motor overheats, then the drafts from the dryer can pull that fire up into the duct and venting, allowing a house fire to develop.

To avoid problems, make sure you disconnect, clean, and inspect the dryer duct and venting regularly. Always clean the dryer lint trap before using the dryer. If you hire a company to clean the vent tube, make certain they are experienced and professional. The wrong company can do more harm than good to the vent..

As Info: The Consumer Products Safety Commission estimates there are 24,000 clothes dryer fires each year in the United States, amounting to \$96,000,000 in estimated property damage. Lack of maintenance is the leading cause of dryer fires, and **LINT** is the leading material to ignite. These fires can be caused by failure of mechanical and/or electrical parts within the dryer itself, improper materials being put into the dryer, and insufficient airflow as a result of improper installation. Clothes dryers can be a source of home fires. Be sure to check your dryer vent and vent hose regularly for lint accumulation. Lint is an excellent source of ignition for a fire. Vents should be made of rigid metal, because flexible vents can be damaged by heat, age and contact with other objects. All vents need to discharge directly to the home's exterior.

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