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Dryer and washing machine safety

Dryer and washing machines were involved in one out of every twenty-five home structure fires reported to U.S. fire departments in 1999-2002.

Facts and figures

- Dryers and washing machines were involved in an average of 13,300 home structure fires per year between 1999 and 2002. These fires caused an average of 10 deaths, 280 injuries and \$97 million in direct property damage per year.
- Clothes dryers and washing machines were involved in 4% of the home structure fires reported between 1999 and 2002.
- Clothes dryers accounted for 93% of the fires; washing machines 4%, and washer and dryer combinations accounted for 3%.
- The leading cause of home clothes dryer and washer fires was failure to clean (30%), followed by unclassified mechanical failure or malfunction (19%). Sixteen percent were caused by some type of electrical failure or short circuit.
- Almost one third (31%) of these fires started with the ignition of clothing. In one quarter (24%), dust, fiber, or lint was the first item ignited.

Source: NFPA's *U.S. Home Product Report: Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires*, November, 2005.

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Safety tips

- Do not operate the dryer without a lint filter. Clean lint filters before or after each use and remove accumulated lint from around the drum.
- Make sure that the dryer is plugged into an outlet suitable for its electrical needs as overloaded electrical outlets can result in blown fuses or tripped circuit breakers.
- Turn the dryer off when leaving the home.
- Keep the dryer area clear of combustibles (i.e., boxes or clothing).

> "The U.S. Home Product Report: Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires, 2005. **Members:** [Download this report for free.](#) (PDF, 544 KB) **Non-members:** [Order this report for free.](#) (PDF, 18 KB)

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- Dryers should be installed and serviced by a professional.
- Have gas-powered dryers inspected by a professional regularly to ensure that the gas line and connection are intact.

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