

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Spate of clothes dryer fires prompts warning

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A recent spate of fires linked to clothes dryers in South Australia has prompted a warning from the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS).

MFS Community Safety District Officer, Allan Foster says in recent weeks, the MFS has responded to several clothes dryer fires.

“With the onset of colder weather, people are relying on their clothes dryers to speed up the drying process for their clothes, towels and bedding.

“Unfortunately we’ve seen a sudden jump in the number of fires linked to clothes dryers and are concerned a fire could claim a home, business or life,” Mr Foster says.

District Officer Foster says a common cause of clothes dryer fires can be lint filters that have been left uncleaned.

“A build up of lint can come into contact with the drying element, causing the lint and clothing to ignite,” he says.

The MFS doesn’t discourage the use of clothes dryers. Instead, the fire service encourages everyone to follow these safety tips:

- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions and ensure the lint filter is cleaned before every load.
- If you use anti static sheets scrub the lint filter with warm soapy water and then rinse every month. This will remove any waxy build up on the filter.
- Move the dryer and regularly vacuum any lint that has collected behind and underneath.
- Ensure there is adequate room for ventilation around the dryer.
- Never use the dryer for drying clothes or rags that have been used to absorb flammable liquids or oils.
- You need to wash clothes worn while using oils or sprays in hot water and detergent to remove such substances before putting them in a dryer.
- Never use the dryer to dry clothes that have not been washed. Unwashed clothes have a greater build up of contaminants, especially oils and grease. Lint from these clothes will be more combustible and can ignite when hot.
- Never turn the dryer off before the cool down period is over. There have been fires resulting from clothing being left bunched up while still hot inside the dryer. Clothes dryers are designed to allow clothes to cool down before the cycle is finished.
- Do not leave your clothes dryer operating unattended.
- Any repairs of your clothes dryer must be carried out by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

The fire service urges householders to combine the above safety tips with reliable, working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

For media enquiries please telephone the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.

Country callers 1300 737 637.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au