



Fire and Life Safety Bulletin

August 2011

Stopping Dryer Fires Before They Start

Dryers are a device that we use very often, however, we fail to adequately install and maintain them. Based on the operating nature of these appliances, the risk of a fire can be very high if proper procedures are not followed. Here are some basic safety tips to follow:

- Replace plastic or foil, accordion type ducting material with rigid or corrugated semi-rigid metal duct. The flexible plastic or foil type duct can more easily trap lint and is more susceptible to kinks or crushing, which can greatly reduce the airflow.
- Clean the lint screen/filter before or after drying each load of clothes.
- Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct periodically. Check the outside dryer vent while the dryer is operating to make sure exhaust air is escaping. If it is not, the vent or the exhaust duct may be blocked. After cleaning, remember to reconnect the ducting to the dryer and outside vent.
- Clean behind the dryer where lint can build up. Keep the area around the dryer clean and free of clutter.
- Take special care when drying clothes that have been soiled with volatile chemicals such as gasoline, cooking oils, cleaning agents or finishing oils. If possible, wash the clothing more than once to minimize the amount of volatile chemicals on the clothes. Keep in mind that heavily saturated clothes should be washed outside first to remove as much of the chemicals as possible. The chemical vapors could be ignited by the electrical system of the washing machine. If possible, hang the clothes outside to dry.
- Never let your clothes dryer run while you are out of the house or even worse, when you are asleep.
- Thoroughly read the manufacturer's instructions regarding the safe use of the dryer.



City Gas Leak Recognition and Response

**BE SAFE ABOUT
NATURAL GAS!**



The distinctive odor of natural gas is a safety feature to alert you and your family to even the smallest amount that might escape. Because natural gas has no odor, a harmless chemical is added to create the distinctive odor of rotten eggs. A gas leak is usually recognized by the smell, sight or sound.

Smell — Natural gas is colorless and has a pungent odor of rotten eggs so that you will recognize it quickly.

Sight — You may see a white cloud, mist, fog, bubbles in standing water, or vegetation that appears to be dead or dying for no apparent reason.

Sound — You may hear an unusual noise like roaring, hissing or whistling.

What should you do if you suspect a leak?

- Protect life first: move to a safe environment.
- Call 911 or the City of Richmond Department of Utilities at 644-3000.
- ***Do Not*** strike a match, use telephones, switch on/off appliances, lights or even a flashlight in the area you smell gas. These items can produce sparks that might ignite and cause an explosion.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Water Safety Tips



- > The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with a buddy and never swim alone. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability.
- > Children and inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD) when around the water. When on moving water, ***everyone*** should wear a PFD.
- > Watch out for the dangerous “too’s” - too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- > Be knowledgeable of the water environment you are in and its potential hazards, such as deep and shallow areas, currents, depth changes, obstructions and where the entry and exit points are located. The more informed you are, the more aware you will be of hazards and safe practices.
- > Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather.
- > Use a feet first entry method when entering the water.
- > Do not mix alcohol with swimming, diving or boating. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body’s ability to stay warm.
- > Know how to recognize, prevent, and respond to emergencies.

Physical Disability as a Factor in Home Fire Deaths

During 2004-2008, physical disability was a contributing factor in an estimated average of 380 (14%) home fire deaths per year according to reports by the National Fire Protection Association. The American Community Survey reported that 9% of community residents who were at least five years old in 2005-2007 had some type of physical disability, while 4% had a sensory disability.

When a physical disability contributed to the fatal fire injury:

- More than half (55%) of the victims died as a result of home fires with working smoke alarms compared to only 38% of home fire victims overall.
- Almost one-third (30%) of victims with physical disabilities were unable to act to save themselves.
- 51% of the victims were involved in ignition and in the area of origin when the incident began.
- Victims were more likely to die from a fire that began with either mattresses or bedding (20% vs. 13% of all home fire victims), or clothing (11% vs. 5% of all home victims).
- Three of every five victims, when physical disability was a factor, were over the age 65.
- Two of every five (41%) victims were killed by a fire started by smoking materials, compared to one-quarter (25%) of total home fire victims.
- 86% of the victims were killed in fires in one or two-family homes. Apartment fires killed 14% of the victims.

If a fire occurs in your home, your chances of survival will depend on how quickly and safely you are able to get out. People with serious mobility difficulties should be encouraged to have their bedroom as close to an exit as practical. Home escape planning should include whatever action is necessary to see that ***all*** individuals can safely exit the building.

Smoke Alarms Save Lives.....Are You and Your Family Protected?

Almost two-thirds of reported home fire deaths occur from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. ***Do you have a working smoke alarm?*** The Richmond Metro Fire Departments offer free smoke alarms, batteries and installation. All you have to do is call the *Metro Richmond Fire Safety Hotline* toll-free at 1-888-537-5967 to schedule a visit from your firefighters. If you would like, we can even conduct a free home safety survey while we are there. Call today!