

# the **ADVISOR**

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## CLOTHES DRYER SAFETY

**A CLOTHES DRYER IS AN APPLIANCE YOU WILL FIND IN ALMOST EVERY HOME. UNFORTUNATELY, IF NOT PROPERLY MAINTAINED, IT CAN ALSO BE A MAJOR FIRE HAZARD.**

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) 2012 special report, an estimated 2,900 clothes dryer fires in residential buildings are reported to U.S. fire departments each year, and cause an estimated five deaths, 100 injuries and \$35 million in property loss. The winter months seem to be when the most home house fires occur, with January topping out at 11 percent.

For the most part, clothes dryer fires are caused when lint, which is a highly combustible material, accumulates in both the dryer and the dryer vent causing reduced airflow. Another cause of dryer fires is blockage of dryer vents by birds or other small animals that get into the vent. The blocked vent may cause overheating and start a fire.

The good news is there are a number of things you can do to help prevent a clothes dryer fire from happening in your home.

*Source: USFA Report, Topical Fire Series: Clothes Dryer Fires in Residential Buildings (2008-2010)*

### The USFA recommends the following dryer safety tips:

- Have your clothes dryer installed by qualified personnel.
- Failure to clean is the leading factor contributing to the start of clothes dryer fires. Clean the lint filter before and after each cycle, as well as and the back of the dryer where lint can build up. In addition, clean the lint filter with a nylon brush at least every six months or more if it becomes clogged.
- Inspect the venting system behind the dryer to ensure it is not damaged, crushed or restricted.
- Outside wall dampers should have a covering that will keep out rain, snow and dirt. Do not use wire screen or cloth as these can collect lint and clog areas of the dryer vent.
- Replace coiled-wire foil or plastic venting with rigid, non-ribbed metal duct.
- The interior of the dryer and venting system should be serviced and cleaned periodically by qualified service personnel.

- Check periodically to make sure nests of animals and insects are not blocking the outside vent.
- Keep the area around the clothes dryer free of items that can burn.
- Do not dry anything containing foam, rubber or plastic.
- Do not leave a clothes dryer running if you leave home or when you go to bed.



**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PROTECTING YOUR HOME AND REDUCING RISK,** visit the Personal Lines Consumer Information and Safety Tips section on **GuideOne.com**.

**TO REPORT A CLAIM,** call the GuideLine<sup>®</sup> toll free at 1-888-748-4326 any time – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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## DRIVING IN SEVERE WEATHER

### Tips for Keeping You Safe on the Road

Driving during severe weather such as snow, sleet or ice can be dangerous. The best way to stay safe during severe weather is not to drive at all. However, life sometimes forces us to face conditions we would prefer not to be driving in. The following are some tips to help keep you on the road and safe during severe weather.

#### Before Your Trip:

- Check the weather forecast for your entire route. This will help you to be better prepared for what's in store.
- Be sure to inform someone of your destination, route and the time you plan to arrive.
- Carry a disaster supply kit in your car at all times. This should include a flashlight and batteries, compass, first aid kit, reflective triangles, exterior windshield cleaner, ice scraper and snow brush, matches, scissors and non-perishable high protein foods.
- Have at least a half tank of gas in your vehicle at all times during your trip.

#### While on the Road:

- Avoid using cruise control when on a slippery surface.
- Take it slow. Everything takes longer during severe weather – accelerating, stopping and turning. Be sure to give yourself enough time to maneuver.
- Increase your following distance to provide the longer distance needed if you have to stop.

#### If You're Stranded:

- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are and how far it is to help.
- Run the heater about every 10 minutes to stay warm.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth to your antenna to signal distress.

Sources: American Red Cross, National Highway of Traffic Safety Administration and the National Safety Council.



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