

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Wet weather prompts clothes dryer warning

Tuesday, 17 September 2013

The onset of wet weather has prompted the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) to issue a warning about the dangers of clothes dryers.

Over the colder months, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters respond to fires caused by clothes dryers that are often due to poor maintenance or incorrect use.

MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Commander Shaun Ruxton said two of the key causes of clothes dryer fires are the build-up of lint and leaving clothes dryers operating unattended.

“We all love having warm, dry clothing during colder weather, but it is vital that people ensure the lint filter on their clothes dryer is cleaned out regularly. A common mistake people make is setting the dryer to run for too long and over-drying the clothing. When you use the dryer for too long the clothes, lint or even the machine can catch alight. The fire danger is greatly increased if the dryer is left running unsupervised.”

“Another key risk is spontaneous combustion. Always allow your clothes, towels or bedding to go through the ‘cool down’ cycle to allow them to cool completely. If you do pull the clothes out when they are hot, spread them out and let them cool before putting them away,” MFS Commander Ruxton said.

In April 2011, the Waterloo Corner Hotel at Paralowie suffered up to \$2 million in damage in an accidental fire believed to have been caused by spontaneous combustion. Investigators found the likely cause to be hot towels from a clothes dryer that had been packed away while still hot.

### NATIONAL RECALLS – CLOTHES DRYERS AND WASHING MACHINES

Currently, national recalls are in place due to potential fire hazards linked to specific models of clothes dryers and a washing machine. Click on the links below for further details:

- **Recall of four clothes dryers manufactured between 2005-06:**  
<http://www.recalls.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/1000777>
- **Recall of a top-loader washing machine that may be a fire hazard:**  
<http://www.recalls.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/1047306>

The MFS asks the public to **follow these safety tips for clothes dryers:**

- 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 regularly with warm soapy water and then rinse. 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 (such as linseed and turpentine).
- 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 can be more combustible and may 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 should be carried out by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- **Always** ensure washing is completely cool and dry before storing.

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

**For media enquiries and interviews call 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](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)