

## Fire Chief Larry Meyer Spring-Summer 2015 Web News

### Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms

Smoke rises, so smoke alarms should be installed high on the wall inside each sleeping area. CO alarms can be placed inside or outside the sleeping area at any height on the wall. That's because CO spreads evenly throughout the air (it's essentially the same weight).

Smoke alarms do save lives! According to the National Fire Protection Association, smoke alarms have led to a nearly 50 percent decrease in fire-related deaths since their introduction in the 1970s. Test your alarms at least once per month to be sure they are functioning properly. Overlooking the task is a common mistake in smoke alarm maintenance.

Smoke and CO alarms have an expiration date. Since these devices are constantly working, they can't last forever. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years, and CO alarms should be replaced every five to seven years, depending on the model. Write the installation date on the back of the alarm with a permanent marker as a helpful reminder.

People have nearly a 50 percent better chance of surviving a fire if their home has the recommended number of smoke alarms, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, including the basement, and inside each sleeping area.

### Dryer Lint Traps and Vent Hoses

I know it's easy to disregard the lint trap, but lint buildup can cause the dryer to overheat or start a fire. Clean out the lint trap before and after using the dryer. Also, dryer vents should be cleaned every year, according to the National Fire Protection Association; more often, if you notice it's taking longer to dry your clothes. Cleaning out your vent may help prevent a possible dryer-induced house fire and keep your machine running more efficiently.

Manufacturers usually recommend that you have your vent and your dryer cabinet, which is the structure that contains the drum in which you put your clothes to dry, and vent cleaned by a professional at least once a year, or, according to the CPSC, more often if you use your dryer frequently. Be sure to check your manual, which has recommendations based on the size and the type of dryer hose and vents.

It may be a good idea to check your vent and hose every 60 to 90 days if:

Multiple people are using the same dryer

The dryer is more than a decade old

The dryer hose is more than 10 feet long

The dryer hose has more than one 90-degree turn

A good habit is to do this every spring and fall when you change the clocks. (We spring forward on March 10 this year.)

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### Outlets, Power Tools and Electrical Cord Safety

The CPSC recommends an annual check of outdoor electrical equipment, including:

**Outlets.** Check that each outlet has its own weatherproof outlet cover, and keep it closed when not in use. Also, make sure each outlet is a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI), which turns itself off if it senses a current leak or a short circuit. If you must use an outlet during wet weather, the CPSC suggests a "weatherproof while in use" cover, which keeps an outlet covered even when a cord is plugged in.

**Electric garden tools.** Avoid using corded power tools in wet or damp locations. The agency also suggests checking all tools for cord damage, such as cracks or exposed wires, and to

make sure they are in good condition and operating properly. Use tools with insulated grips to avoid the potential of electric shock.

Extension cords. Use only extension cords that are rated for outdoor use; indoor cords can't withstand the weather conditions when they're used outdoors, and may become a fire or shock hazard. An estimated 3,300 residential fires originate from extension cords each year.