

Air Ducts and Dryer Vents

By Sandra Gahlinger

After reading an article about cleaning dryer vents and talking to my brother, who is a local fire chief, my husband and I learned that keeping dryer vents clean can prevent a disaster and also maintain the proper functioning of the dryer. We also read a post on our community website about the value of cleaning air ducts and decided to have both services in our home.

When the technicians came to evaluate our situation, they checked to see if we needed a new dryer vent hose (which we did not) and used a special camera to determine the condition of our air ducts. We learned our air ducts contained a large amount of dust buildup and some small screws and other debris. We also had some registers that needed to be sealed since they have gaps between the boot and the ceiling.

Knowing when a dryer vent needs to be cleaned. A homeowner can get a good idea if the dryer vent needs cleaning if:

- clothing is taking longer to dry than normal
- clothing is very hot and still damp when the dryer finishes (especially heavy items such as towels)
- the dryer itself feels hotter than normal
- there is no lint on the lint screen (which could be an indication that the exhaust system is clogged)
- there is lint debris around the back of the dryer.

Potential benefits of cleaning a dryer vent. The clothes dryer will run more efficiently after a cleaning and clothing will take less time to dry, resulting in less wear and tear on the appliance and using less electricity or gas. In addition, the risk of a fire from the dryer lint will be greatly reduced.

Can a homeowner do a DIY cleaning of the dryer vent? The National Fire Prevention Agency (NFPA) advises homeowners to consult a professional who will have invested in special equipment to clean and can video inspect the hard-to-reach areas of the dryer vent system. (Author's note: I was pretty good about cleaning out the front vent on the dryer, and even have a dryer vent cleaning kit. Our technicians advised that the vacuum attachment is the way to go to clean out the front vent and further advised not to use the brush that is often included in dryer vent cleaning kits because it will only pack the lint further down into the vent.)

Potential benefits of cleaning air ducts in the home. While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that research on this topic is still ongoing, professional air duct cleaning companies maintain that this service is of definite benefit to homeowners. In recommending their services, these companies say that the inside of your duct work is the equivalent of an extra room in your home that never gets dusted or vacuumed, and that when your ducts are cleaned, the existing dust is eliminated and cannot infiltrate your home. They further emphasize that dust mites feed on debris found in duct work, and when the debris is removed, so is their food source. Also, by greatly reducing particulate debris in your ducts, you reduce dust particles and potential allergens in the air that aggravate those with respiratory illnesses. (Note: In cases where insurance companies recognize removing dust from your ducts, with a doctor's prescription, cleaning charges could be covered by your insurance company. Check this with your insurance company, and ask your doctor for a prescription if appropriate.)

Air duct cleaning companies recommend air duct system inspections in homes that are newly built or remodeled, as well as previously constructed homes. During construction, the duct work is exposed and construction debris such as plaster dust, hardwood floor sanding dust, drywall, wood, dust, insects and insulation get into the duct work. In an abundance of caution, many home buyers have ducts inspected/cleaned prior to closing on their home. For more detailed information on the research into this service, visit the EPA's website on indoor air quality at epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq, and search for "air duct cleaning."

Over 15,000 house fires a year are caused by clogged dryer vents, and there may

be evidence that cleaning air ducts can be beneficial as well. It is recommended that dryer vents be cleaned once a year and that air ducts be evaluated every 10-12 years.

Note: Breathe Cleaner Aire provided information for this article.

The Country Club of the Crystal Coast

...where friends connect

By John Ferguson

Spring has sprung, the days are longer, and we are seeing the grass starting to grow and turn green, and the trees, azaleas and other flowers are starting to bloom. Having spent many years where winters are much more severe than in North Carolina, I have become spoiled. Nevertheless, it has been cold and windy for entirely too long, and I look forward to the days when shorts and flip-flops are the dress for the day.

Now that it is spring, some of you will want to do that spring cleaning, start working in the yard, or getting that honey-do list worked off. The devil in me wants to tempt you by saying that there are other things that you can do. Golf, tennis, swimming, and soccer golf are what you should be doing. That honey-do list has waited this long, so why not "get your play on" first? The Country Club of the Crystal Coast is the perfect place to spend your new-found freedom from cabin fever. It is also a place where you can find new friends or reconnect with those you have been unable to see during the past few months. Golf and tennis are open to the public and each provides you with membership for the day. This means that nonmembers can enjoy the restaurant or other activities for the day when they come to play their sport. After participating at the club a few times, we are sure that you will want to become a full-time member.

Of course, most of you will be unlike me and decide that you want to get your work done first. That is the right thing to do, after all. The club is open after working hours and has many social as well as other activities available for our members and guests. For example, we have author nights each month when local authors present their works and answer questions associated with their books. These events are open to the public. On April 7, Lynne Swanson will be discussing her book *Smile! and other practical life lessons your dogs can teach you (while you are training them)*. This book immerses the reader in canine culture in a manner that provides incredible insight into human behavior. Don't miss out on this informative review. You can reserve your dinner and presentation spot by calling the country club at 726-1034, ext. 17.

The club management is available each business day to respond to your questions, and we also have an open house on April 6, which will afford you the opportunity to meet the club managers and also members. We would love for you to come and get your questions answered. I think you will be impressed with what you see.

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