

Five Things You Can Do to Prevent a Costly Appliance Repair

by Dave Watters

Request Regular Maintenance

An appliance is an investment. Regular maintenance will protect that investment. Most repair organizations will offer a short-term warranty for their work. The cost of maintenance is usually less than the full repair. It is a sound business decision to get regular maintenance.

Check the Vents

The dryer operates by creating airflow through the dryer. Air is drawn in from the inside, warmed by the ignition system, passed over the clothing and out through the lint trapping system, then to the dryer duct and finally to the outside port.

If air is blocked it will not flow properly and therefore the dryer will not dry properly. Ways in which the airflow is blocked is through the venting system.

Machines that are pushed or have moved back too far and crimp, kink or otherwise restrict the air flowing through the ducting system will prevent efficient drying from taking place.

Vents that are too long will also prevent air flow. Consult the manufacturer's guidelines on installation for limits on the dryer vent length and number of bends. Multiple bends can create too much restriction.

Vent ports that do not open when air is coming out or are missing or broken will block the air from flowing or allow too much air to flow. This condition either increases the heating or robs the heating from taking place.

Check the Lint Trap

The purpose of the lint trap is to prevent lint from accumulating around the outside of the dryer. It is made up of a mesh screen to trap the lint but allow the air to flow through it. It works like a screen door, allowing air but not larger, unwanted airborne items. This trap must be cleaned before each use.

The lint trap should be checked for integrity to ensure it will trap the lint and also that the spaces in the mesh are clear and air can flow through it. If the mesh becomes integrated with foreign material that blocks the spaces in the mesh it will not allow airflow and therefore prevent efficient drying.

Check the Heat

If the airflow has been restricted for a while several things can occur. First, those who use the dryer may begin complaining that they have to run it multiple times to get the same level of drying as before. Next, lint will begin backing up into the dryer ignition area as

well as the belt, tensioner, rollers and motor/blower assemblies. If allowed to continue, the lint will begin drying up the grease in the moving parts and they will begin to squeak.

Over time this can also result in the high limit or other fused device tripping open due to the increased temperatures in the ignition area. This will open the circuit to the heater (whether gas or electric) and cause the unit to stop heating altogether.

Most manufacturers use devices that cannot be reset. The dryer must be opened up and the open device replaced. As you may guess, this repair is expensive and preventable.

Another process can occur at this time as well. As lint is collecting in and around the ignition area it begins to smolder and or catch fire. There have been cases of houses catching fire due to the lint in the dryer acting as an incendiary.

Check the Noise

When the noise level of a dryer is increasing it is an indication of a problem. Besides the causes already described, there are other reasons for the squeaking or banging noise.

Hair, when it is stretched and crushed becomes a very viscous paste. When hair becomes entwined around the roller spindles it becomes paste. This binds the rollers and dries the oil out of the bearings. The result is that the roller will stop turning well or stop altogether. Now the drum is forcing it to roll as it turns and it squeaks.

Loose or broken baffles [interior “blades” that turn the clothes over] will cause a sliding sound due to coins and other items getting inside them. It is in rhythm with the drum. As the drum turns, the debris will fall from the inside to the outside. They bang against the drum as they drop back down and sound as zippers on jackets would sound.

To check the baffle, simply grab it in your hand and gently move it from side to side. If it is loose it needs to get tightened or replaced. This should be done as soon as possible. Hardware falling off of the baffles as the drum is spinning can get deposited into the mechanism of the dryer and create more problems.

In Conclusion

Getting regular annual maintenance can prevent costly repairs in the future. It can also prolong the life of your appliance. The purpose of regular maintenance is to find sources of trouble early so that costly repairs are minimized.

Keep the dryer vents open and clear. Confirm that air can flow through the lint trap. Confirm there is heat. Check that the noise level is acceptable.

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