

APPLIANCE DOCTOR

Replace plastic vent line with aluminum



JOE GAGNON

When my dryer quit drying I called a service man to repair it. All he did to fix the problem was remove a bird's nest from inside the vent line. He told my husband to replace the plastic vent line with solid aluminum line. The dryer now works fine, but will this change to metal vent line prevent the same occurrence?

Many thousands of homeowners go through this same problem every year and the majority are using the old slinky type dryer vent line. The reason the birds like it so much is because it has folds and crevices in it that can be stretched to form a pocket where they can build their little homes. They like the heat factor, which allows mama bird to leave the nest and take a cruise while the eggs are still kept warm. It is a sad day, though, when little children observe the service technician remove a nest with little eggs or birds in the nest. That happening can be etched in the mind forever.

In most cases, the old style solid metal vent line will prevent the nest be-

cause it is smooth and isn't going along with nature.

Your question helps me bring up another factor. In the past year, 47 major newspapers across the country had my face plastered across their front pages with the caption, "Your dryer is a ticking time bomb." The story was about how many house fires there are in the United States every year (more than 13,000) caused by the clothes dryer. It is finally agreed by many — the government, manufacturers, underwriters, fire commissions, even the vent line producers themselves — that the majority of these fires are caused by the use of an improper vent line.

When I say "improper vent line," I mean the plastic flexible vent line that has been used by the majority of homeowners for more than 20 years. Just think of the tragedy that has occurred because consumers weren't aware. I ask you to cut out this column and keep it to help someone who may not have heard of this story.

A restriction to the air movement that travels through your dryer to the outside will cause a lint buildup inside the dryer, which can then be an ignition point. It is as simple as that, and I have seen it happen many, many times.

Common sense says that the old-

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fashioned solid aluminum vent line has no ridges and is smooth and will let the air, plus the lint, go to the outside in a much easier fashion. The plastic or the tinfoil with ridges will only help create this ticking time bomb because of the designated obstacle it presents to smooth air flow. The buildup of lint inside your vent line occurs rapidly and that gives you sufficient restriction to air movement, causing lint buildup inside the dryer. Believe me, folks, when I tell you that this causes a fire, and also believe that it is responsible for more than 70 percent of the service calls rendered on clothes dryers. If air can't move to the outside as it is supposed to, the inside of the product runs under extreme high heat conditions and causes premature failure of drum rollers, belts, bearings, seals, motors, etc. Also, the dryer consumes more of your dollars to operate because it takes much longer to dry a load.

The state construction code now says that in new home construction or home renovation you must use metal vent line to vent your dryer. The Maytag Co. says on a warning ticket attached to its products, "Do not use plastic or tinfoil vent line." The Appliance Doctor says, "I have been an expert witness in several lawsuits across this country against those who wouldn't listen to reason. They installed plastic vent line, a fire

resulted and tragedy happened. Some very big settlements were awarded to homeowners."

You will find this plastic vent line still available in many stores, but it is the responsibility of these people to help educate the buying public. Meijer and Damman stores have notices posted in their vent line departments to warn consumers of what is proper to vent your clothes dryer.

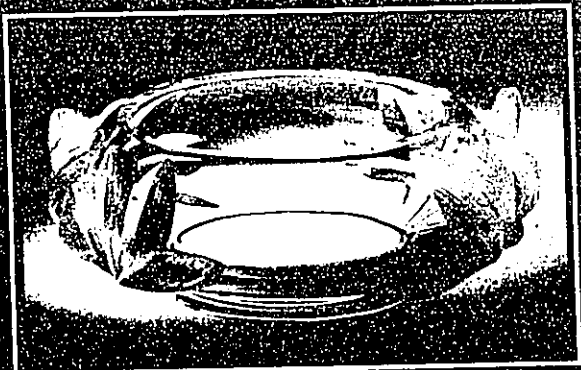
Proper venting of your dryer is an easy, do-it-yourself job with all the material available at your local hardware store. Take a string and measure how many feet you need from the back of the dryer to the flapper piece in the wall. Buy the needed amount that comes in two-foot sections and couples together very easily. Wrap the joints with duct tape, don't use screws, and make sure you bought the needed elbows to go around the corners. When you are done, and have used two elbows in the system, your vent line shouldn't be any longer than 14 feet from the dryer to the outside.

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you: The bird got in through the flapper outside, and that might be prevented by making sure the flapper is free of lint and closes properly. Don't forget, folks, that you still have to clean out the vent line occasionally even though you're now using the solid aluminum proper vent line.

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJRR-AM. He is author of "First Aid from the Appliance Doctor," available at area bookstores.

LALIQUE

of Sherwood Studios



CCS students show work at trade fair

Students from the Center for Creative Studies Industrial Design Department exhibited their furniture designs at the NeoCon '95 World's Trade Fair, the annual international conference and exposition of the International Interior Design Association.

The fair took place in Chicago last week. It is the first year that CCS had a display booth of its own at NeoCon. Last year CCS students participated as part of the Steelcase exhibit.

CCS showed 50 to 60 full-scale furniture pieces, 12 interior and exterior models, and 20 maquettes, from 31 students. The display included ideations, sketches and photographs documenting the process of creating the products.

"You are not invited to NeoCon unless you are qualified. This show is for the cutting edge and future of furniture design," said Bill House, chair of industrial design.

Among the area students who exhib-

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ited at NeoCon were Kristyn Koth and Jason McCombe of Farmington Hills, Maureen Voorhels of West Bloomfield, Greg Darby of Canton, Jason Coffey of Troy, Patrick McDonald of Birmingham and Jesus Piney of Plymouth.

In addition to CCS, six other schools exhibited at this year's event — the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Ball State University, the University of Illinois-Chicago, Northern Illinois and the University of Missouri-Columbia.