



City of Madison Fire Department

News Release

Date: April 6, 2009

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Spontaneous Combustion Caused East Side Dryer Fire

City of Madison Fire Investigators say a fire last week at 549 Aztalan Drive was caused by spontaneous combustion of oily rags in the dryer.

A woman, her two children and the family dog escaped without injury after being alerted by fluctuating numbers on a carbon monoxide alarm. Shortly after noticing the changes in the CO alarm, the woman reported seeing “yellow smoke” in the laundry room. She and her children exited through the front door of the home and called 911.

The occupants reported that they had been drying towels previously soiled with cooking oils and grease. Vegetable oils are subject to self-heating, which may occur during the drying process or even after the laundry is removed from the dryer. The fire is typically accompanied by an acrid, yellowish smoke.

No one was injured in the fire, but there was extensive heat and smoke damage throughout the one-story home. Damages to the home and its contents are now estimated at \$150,000.

The City of Madison Fire Department reminds residents:

- **Every home should have a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm.**
- **When exiting a building where there is a fire, close doors behind you to impede the spread of fire.**
- **Occupants should sleep with bedroom doors closed to reduce the spread of smoke.**
- **Clean the lint screen/filter before or after drying each load of clothes.**
- **Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct periodically.**
- **Clean behind the dryer, where lint can build up.**
- **Take special care when drying clothes that have been soiled with volatile chemicals** such as gasoline, cooking oils, cleaning agents, or finishing oils and stains. If possible, wash the clothing more than once to minimize the amount of volatile chemicals on the clothes and, preferably, hang the clothes to dry. If using a dryer, use the lowest heat setting and a drying cycle that has a cool-down period at the end of the cycle. To prevent clothes from igniting after drying, do not leave the dried clothes in the dryer or piled in a laundry basket.

Some Information from the Consumer Product Safety Commission

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