

Life & Times

MARCH 2018

CLOTHES DRYER FIRES COST \$35 MILLION A YEAR

An estimated 2,900 clothes dryer fires in residential buildings are reported to U.S. fire departments each year and cause an estimated \$35 million in property losses, according to a new government report.

The report by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) said that 84

percent of clothes dryer fires took place in residential buildings.



characteristics of clothes dryer fires in residential buildings and was developed by USFA's National Fire Data Center, based on data from the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).

Damaging fires can occur if clothes dryers are not properly installed or maintained.

The report notes that lint, a highly combustible material, can accumulate both in the dryer and in the dryer vent. Accumulated lint leads to reduced airflow and poses a fire hazard. Reduced airflow can also occur when foam-backed rugs or athletic shoes are placed in dryers.

Small birds or other animals nesting in dryer exhaust vents is another hazard. A compromised vent will not exhaust properly, possibly resulting in overheating and/or fire.

Source: USFA

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Also, according to the report:

- Clothes dryer fire incidence in residential buildings was higher in the fall and winter months, peaking in January at 11 percent.
- Failure to clean (34 percent) was the leading factor contributing to the ignition of clothes dryer fires in residential buildings.
- Dust, fiber and lint (28 percent) and clothing not on a person (27 percent) were, by far, the leading items first ignited in clothes dryer fires in residential buildings.
- Fifty-four percent of clothes dryer fires in residential buildings were confined to the object of origin.

The report, "Clothes Dryer Fires in Residential Buildings," examines

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For Details

THINKING OF SELLING? NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT

If you thought about selling your house this year, now may be the time to do it. The inventory of homes for sale is well below historic norms and buyer demand is skyrocketing. We were still in high school when we learned the concept of supply and demand: the best time to sell something is when supply of that item is low and demand for that item is high. That defines today's real estate market.

Jonathan Smoke, Chief Economist at realtor.com, revealed in a recent article that:

"The biggest challenge to buyers this spring will be simply finding a home to buy and getting it successfully under contract. That's because the supply of homes for sale is at an all-time low, and yet demand is strong and getting stronger."

Smoke goes on to say:

"We started the year with the lowest inventory of homes available for sale that we've ever seen on realtor.com. While we did see inventory grow 2% in February, total inventory was down 11% over last year."

In this type of market, a seller may hold a major negotiating advantage when it comes to price and other aspects of the real estate transaction including the inspection, appraisal and financing contingencies.

Bottom Line

As a potential seller, you are in the driver's seat right now. It might be time to hit the gas.

Source: The KCM Crew



CLEANING HOUSE; SECRETS OF A TRULY DEEP CLEAN

Deep clean your house and you'll brighten rooms and help maintain your home's value.

De-bug the light fixtures

See that bug burial ground within your overhead fixtures? Turn off the lights and carefully remove fixture covers, dump out flies and wash with hot soapy water. While you're up there, dust bulbs. Dry everything thoroughly before replacing the cover.

Vacuum heat vents and registers

Dirt and dust build up in heat vents and along register blades. Vents also are great receptacles for coins and missing buttons. Unscrew vent covers from walls or pluck them from floors, remove foreign objects, and vacuum inside the vent. Clean grates with a damp cloth and screw back tightly.



Polish hardware

To deep clean brass door hinges, handles, and cabinet knobs, thoroughly wipe with a damp microfiber cloth,

then polish with Wright's or Weiman brass cleaner (\$4). Dish soap shines up glass or stainless steel knobs. Use a Q-tip to detail the ornamental filigree on knobs and handles.

Replace grungy switch plates

Any amateur can wipe a few fingerprints off cover plates that hide light switches, electric outlets, phone jacks, and cable outlets. But only deep cleaners happily remove plates to vacuum and swipe the gunk behind. (OK, we're a little OCD when it comes to dirt!) Make sure cover plates are straight when you replace them. And pitch plates that are beyond the help of even deep cleaning. New ones cost less than \$2 each.

Neaten weather stripping

Peeling, drooping weather stripping on doors and windows makes rooms look old. If the strip still has some life, nail or glue it back. If it's hopeless, cut out and replace sections, or just pull the whole thing off and start new. A 10-ft. roll of foam weather stripping costs \$8; 16-ft. vinyl costs about \$15.

Replace stove drip pans

Some drip pans are beyond the scrub brush. Replacing them costs about \$3 each and instantly freshens your stove.

Source: Jane Hoback

CHEER UP! GARDENING CAN COMBAT DEPRESSION

Can an hour in the garden replace your antidepressant? Physicians across the pond believe so.

Throwaway your Prozac and plant some peonies to fight depression, says a British physician who believes that time spent in the garden can be as therapeutic as expensive pharmaceuticals.

Sir Richard Thompson, president of the UK's Royal College of Physicians, says the country's new healthcare reforms will allow doctors to embrace the healing powers of digging in dirt, pruning roses, and plucking weeds. Sir Richard is a patron of Thrive, an organization that promotes and provides gardening therapy.



"Drug therapy can be really expensive, but gardening costs little and anyone can do it," Sir Richard told the Fraser Coast Chronicle. "Gardening burns off calories, makes joints supple, and is fantastic exercise. It is a physical activity that has been shown to be helpful in the treatment of anxiety, depression, and dementia."

Time to start shoveling!

Source: Lisa Kaplan Gordon

MILITARY: PIZZA MREs ON THE WAY TO TROOPS BY NEXT YEAR

Army researchers have developed an MRE pizza that stays in a pouch for 3 yrs without spoiling or turning soggy. It could reach field soldiers' mess kits within a year.

The military is preparing to produce Meals, Ready to Eat pizzas that are engineered to stay fresh for three years in a pouch. Troops could taste their first pizza MREs in the field by next year, Army officials say.

These don't compare to the freshly made pizzas at an Italian restaurant, but they stack up well to store-bought pizzas, said David Accetta, spokesman for Natick Soldier Research Development & Engineering Center in Maryland.

"I think it's better than frozen pizza," he said.

The pizzas come with only one topping -- pepperoni -- but more varieties will be added as troops weigh in on the kinds they like, he said.

The current generation of MREs must run out before the next generation, which includes the pizzas, can be distributed, Accetta said. He estimated the changeover will happen by 2019.

Some initial reactions were very positive.

"I'm all about it. Adding to the variety of choices for MREs is an outstanding idea, especially if it's a good choice," said Capt. Orlandon Howard with the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team deployed to Europe. "It would be like adding flavor and meat to the wheat bread that already comes in the MRE; that's a great idea."

"When you're away from home, it's nice when you're able to have food that you

would typically enjoy if you were home," he added. "I think it makes things feel a little easier, and home feel a little less distant."

Army researchers spent years trying to develop a pizza without a lot of preservatives that would look and taste fresh after being stored for years in warm temperatures. The key is to maintain the pizza's pH balance, prevent oxygenation and suppress moisture, Accetta said.

Researchers employed molecular science to create dough-drying methods that led to "shelf-stable bread," which is used in MRE pocket sandwiches and now the pizzas, Accetta said.

Pizzas and pocket sandwiches are among the evolving "first-strike meals" that are lighter and more compact than previous MREs, making them easier for soldiers on the battlefield to carry them in rucksacks.

As with all new MREs, professional taste testers sampled the prototypes to gauge the flavor, texture and how the pizzas feel in the mouth, Accetta said. If the pizzas pass muster with the pros, then samples are given to soldiers.

Servicemembers have the final say, he added.

Troops have wanted pizzas since the first MREs rolled out in the 1980s. These pizzas will seem like a gourmet treat to troops in the field, something that civilians who try them while in a comfortable house won't understand, Accetta said.

"You have to be cold, starving, exhausted to really appreciate them," he said.

Source: Scott Wyland, Stars & Stripes



YOUR MARCH HOME CHECKLIST

March can be unpredictable when it comes to the weather, but no matter what Mother Nature is doing outside your window, it's natural to crave a fresh start this time of year.

1. Plant a tree. Spring and fall are the best times to plant trees because wet weather and cooler temperatures make it easier for root systems to get established. Be sure to check with your local nursery to determine which species will do best in your microclimate.
2. Inspect your home's exterior. Once winter storms have passed, carefully inspect the exterior of your home for damage.
3. Simplify the table. Cupboards feeling overstuffed? Simplify your life by paring back on dishes and glassware, letting go of mismatched and chipped pieces and sets you no longer love or use often.
4. Spring-clean the kitchen. Clean small appliances; wipe grease and grime from the range hood, backsplash and light fixtures; clean grout; and vacuum hard-to-reach places (like under the stove) using an attachment.
5. Clean slipcovers and soft furnishings. Smaller slipcovers and washable rugs can be laundered at home; drop off larger pieces with professionals
6. Get ready for tax time. Getting your ducks in a row this month will make things a lot less stressful. Sort through paperwork, update your files and gather all important documents in one place so you're ready to go.
7. Treat yourself to spring blooms. Spring flowers such as daffodils are plentiful and inexpensive this month, so keep an eye out for bargains.
8. Make a garden plan. There's still time to get your garden growing! Sketch out a plan and jot down ideas for this year's plantings, as well as any ideas you have for changes to the hardscape, like putting in a new path or fence. Start some seeds indoors, or pick up seedlings at your local nursery.
9. Clean up patio furniture. Outdoor furniture can get really grimy over the winter, so be sure to give everything a good scrubbing before you start using it for the season. Launder washable outdoor cushion covers, and replace worn-out pieces if needed.
10. Tune up lawn and garden tools. Sharp tools get the job done. Take your lawn mower and clippers in for a sharpening and tune up before you begin work in your garden.



THE QUEST TO FIND THE BEST CHECKOUT LINE

Retailers are trying several new plans to reduce the lengths of their checkout lines.

They want to please customers, and at the same time encourage customers to shop in person rather than go online to buy. The percentage of shoppers who buy online is growing.

Store managers say self-checkout helps, but some people don't like it.

Some stores have copied the Apple model with roaming personnel using hand-held devices for mobile checkout, but that doesn't work in a grocery store. Other stores have personnel come to a long line to pre-scan items while the shoppers are waiting in line.

Studies show that having one line that flows into three registers makes checkout faster. If one register has a problem, the other two are still moving customers. The plan works even better if the line flows into six cash registers.

Oddly, people still prefer to wait in the individual line of their choice, even though they experience remorse if the line turns out to be slower.

One company timed shoppers in line with a stopwatch to determine how impatient they get. They found that up to 2-3 minutes, shoppers' estimates of how long they waited were pretty accurate. When the wait time jumped to five minutes, many thought they had waited twice that long.

Many select a line depending on how full the carts of other shoppers are, the ages of people in front of them and how chatty the checker is, all of which they think will slow down the line.

Source: Cheryl Bower, San Francisco Realtor



DAYLIGHT SAVINGS REMINDER

Daylight Saving Time (United States) begins
 Sunday, March 11, 2018, 2:00am

Daylight Savings Time ends Sunday, November 4, 2018, 2:00am

Except Arizona and Hawaii. Move your clocks ahead 1 hour in spring, and back 1 hour in fall ("Spring Forward, Fall Back").



Today's Laugh

It's been a rough week, but
 on a positive note I didn't
 need bail money or have to
 hide a body.

Whoopie Pie

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (18oz) package devils food cake mix (eggs, oil & water as directed on cake mix package)
- 5 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract



CAKE DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare mix as directed on package, but only use 3/4 cup water.
2. Drop batter onto Whoopie pie pan or greased cookie sheet in approx. 3" circles.
3. Bake at 350°F for 12-15 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Let cool.

FILLING DIRECTIONS:

1. In saucepan, combine milk and flour. Cook over medium-high heat stirring constantly, until it forms a thick paste. Let cool.
2. In medium bowl, beat sugar and butter until fluffy. Add vanilla and cooled milk/flour mixture. Beat until double in volume.
3. Flip cakes over. Spoon a dollop of filling onto half of the cakes. Place the other half of the cakes on top of the filling to form sandwiches.

Source: Ginnys.com

Glowing Easter Egg Hunt



NEEDED

- Plastic Easter Eggs
- Tea Lights
- Candy, Coins or Small Toys

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Just before the sun goes down, place a glowing tea light in each Egg. You could also put in a small candy, sticker, coin, small toy or anything else you want too!
2. Set the eggs out and let the kids collect them in the dark. SO FUN!



Source: Smart School House

5 EASY DIY WEEKEND PROJECTS UNDER \$300

Just another weekend? Not if you take advantage with one or more of these 5 great projects you can easily pull off for under \$300. Most of the cost of these DIY weekend projects is in the materials. The labor — that's you — is free. All you need now are the hours. But, hey, you've got two full days — plenty of time to be a superhero weekend warrior and grab some R&R.

Project #1: Add a Garden Arbor Entry

The setup: Install an eye-catching portal to your garden with a freestanding arbor. It'll look great at the end of a garden path or framing a grassy area between planting beds.

Specs and cost: Garden arbors can be priced up to thousands of dollars, but you can find nice-looking kits in redwood, cedar, and vinyl at your local home improvement or garden center for \$200 to \$300. Typical sizes are about 7 feet high and 3 to 4 feet wide. You'll have to assemble the kit yourself.

Tools: Screwdriver; cordless drill/driver; hammer; tape measure. Kits come pre-cut and pre-drilled for easy assembly, and usually include screws. If fasteners aren't included, check the materials list before you leave the store.

Time: 3 to 5 hours

Project #2: Install a Window Awning

The setup: Summer is super, but too much sunlight from south- and west-facing windows can heat up your interiors and make your AC work overtime. Beat that heat and save energy by using an awning to stop harsh sunlight before it enters your house.

Specs and cost: Residential awnings come in many sizes and colors. Some are plastic or aluminum, but most are made with weatherproof fabrics. They're engineered for wind resistance, and some are retractable. A 4-foot-wide awning with a 2.5-foot projection is \$150 to \$250.

Tools: Cordless drill/driver; adjustable wrench; tape measure; level. You can install an awning on any siding surface, but you'll need a hammer drill to drill holes in brick. To prevent leaks, fill any drilled holes with silicone sealant before you install screws and bolts.

Time: 3 to 4 hours

Project #3: Screen Off Your Air Conditioner from View

The setup: Air conditioning is great, but air conditioner condensers are ugly. Up your curb appeal quotient by hiding your AC condenser or heat pump unit with a simple screen.

Specs and costs: An AC screen is typically three-sided, about 40 inches high, and freestanding — you'll want to be able to move it easily when it comes time to service your HVAC. For about \$100, you can make a screen yourself using weather-resistant cedar or pressure-treated wood to build three frames, and filling each frame with plastic or pressure-treated lattice. Or, buy pre-made fencing panels. A 38-inch-by-38-inch plastic fencing panel is about \$50.

Tools: Hammer; saw; cordless drill/driver; measuring tape;

galvanized wood screws.

Time: Build it yourself in four to six hours. Install pre-made fencing in one to two hours.

Project #4: Add Garage Storage

The setup: Shopping for garage storage solutions is definitely a kid-in-the-candy-store experience. There are so many cool shelves, hooks, and hangers available that you'll need to prioritize your needs. Take stock of long-handled landscape tools, bikes, paint supplies, ladders, and odd ducks, such as that kayak. Measure your available space so you'll have a rough idea of where everything goes.

Specs and cost: Set your under-\$300 budget, grab a cart, and get shopping. Many storage systems are made to be hung on drywall, but hooks and heavy items should be fastened directly to studs. Use a stud finder (\$20) to locate solid framing. If your garage is unfinished, add strips of wood horizontally across studs so you'll have something to fasten your storage goodies to. An 8-foot-long 2-by-4 is about \$2.50.

Tools: Cordless drill/driver; hammer; level; measuring tape; screws and nails.

Time: This is a simple project, but not a fast one. Figure six to 10 hours to get everything where you want it, plus shopping. But, oh the fun in putting everything in its place!



Project #5: Edging Your Garden

The setup: Edging is a great way to define your planting beds, corral garden mulch, and to separate your lawn from your garden or patio.

Specs and cost: Wood and metal edging looks like tiny fencing; they're 4 to 6 inches high. Some include spikes that hold the edging in position; other types must be partially buried. Cost is \$1 to \$5 per foot.

Plastic edging can be molded and colored to mimic brick, wood, and stone. About \$20 for 10 feet.

Concrete edging blocks are smooth, or textured to resemble stone. \$15 to \$25 for 10 feet.

Real stone edging is installed flush with the surrounding grade in a shallow trench on a bed of sand, so digging is required. Stone is sold by the ton and prices vary by region. You'll need about one-third of a ton of flagstone to make an 8-inch-wide edging 50 feet long, costing \$150 to \$200.

Tools: Shovel; wheelbarrow; tin snips (for cutting plastic edging); work gloves.

Time: Pre-made edging will take two to three hours for 50 feet; stone will take six to 10 hours.

Source: John Riha

CALIFORNIA HOME SALES FACTS: JANUARY 2018

State/Region/County	Jan. 2018	Dec. 2017	MTM% Chg	State/Region/County	Jan. 2018	Dec. 2017	MTM% Chg
Calif. State Average	\$527,800	\$549,560	-4.0%	Los Angeles	\$564,100	\$577,920	-2.4%
Calif. Condo Average	\$433,330	\$446,840	-3.0%	Orange County	\$780,000	\$785,500	-0.7%
Sacramento	\$350,000	\$350,000	+0.0%	Riverside	\$397,250	\$385,000	+3.2%
Placer	\$446,000	\$451,500	-1.2%	San Diego	\$590,000	\$605,000	-2.5%
El Dorado	\$480,000	\$450,000	+6.7%	Yolo	\$383,000	\$420,000	-8.8%
Contra-Costa	\$555,000	\$600,000	-7.5%	Fresno	\$253,500	\$259,750	-2.4%
San Francisco	\$1,330,000	\$1,475,000	-9.8%	San Joaquin	\$350,000	\$349,720	+0.1%
Santa Clara	\$1,170,000	\$1,300,000	-10.0%	Stanislaus	\$295,000	\$300,000	-1.7%
Solano	\$425,000	\$416,000	+2.2%	Butte	\$314,750	\$304,000	+3.5%
				Yuba	\$265,360	\$241,000	+10.1%

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MARCH

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3rd Prize \$10 Starbucks Gift Card-Luis A.

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