

Precautions can prevent accidents

Don't overlook dangers of common household appliances

Most households have an array of appliances, equipment and tools that make everyday tasks easier. People can forget about these items' dangers because the items are so much a part of life. Here are three common household items that can pose a danger to you and your family, along with ways to prevent accidents and injury.

Clothes dryer

Every year, dryers cause thousands of major house fires in the U.S. The primary culprit: lint. Dryer venting can become clogged with lint, causing a dangerous buildup of heat and an instant fire that spreads fast.

"If you notice that it's taking longer for your clothes to dry, it's likely that lint is clogging the venting system," explains Chris Hall, an appliance repair expert and president of RepairClinic.com. "You should clean it out as soon as possible."

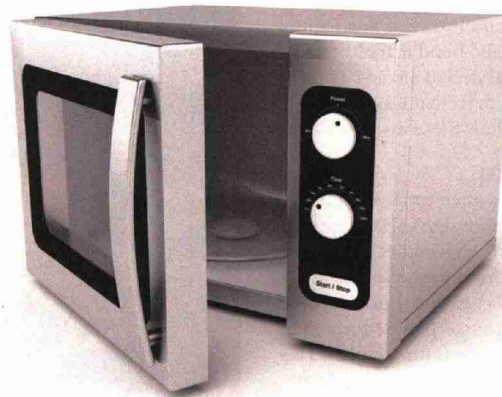
In fact, experts advise homeowners to clean their venting system (from inside of the dryer to the outside vent cap) at least once per year. You can hire a professional to do this or buy a long brush made for the task or a plumbing snake and do it yourself. Remember to unplug your dryer first and if you have a gas dryer, to also shut off the gas. Once your vents are clear, your dryer will dry your clothes faster and more efficiently. Dryer lint traps should be cleaned out after every load.

Vinyl venting should be replaced as soon as possible with an aluminum equivalent. White vinyl no longer meets national fire code standards in the U.S.

Lawnmower

Push, self-propelled and riding lawnmowers all bear great risks for human injury, so proper care and precautions are critical.

"Debris—pet and children's toys, stones, plastic edging, wood chips, pieces of aged blades, etcetera—can be catapulted at speeds of up to 100 miles per hour," says Jeff Linderman, RepairClinic.com's landscaping expert.



"Being hit with these objects at such a speed can be a fatal injury."

Children and pets should stay inside when the mower is in operation, to avoid flying debris. Also, when you use a riding mower, it's particularly difficult to spot children who may venture too close to the mower.

The cutting blade located under the deck should be checked regularly for damage, bends, and dullness. Blades should be replaced every year or two, depending on usage. Replacement blades are inexpensive and easy to install.


Be sure to consult the manual regarding mower adjustments. "Many people often remove or adjust the position of their mower's deflector, despite warnings against this in the mower's owner's manual," says Linderman. Removing the deflector can allow flying debris to fly a longer distance.

Another protective mower safety feature is its rubber trail shield located

at the back of the mower that prevents debris from flying out as the blade runs over it. Check annually to make sure it's working properly and free of tears.

Microwave oven

Replacing electronic parts in a microwave oven can be extremely dangerous and should be left to a repair professional. A microwave oven stores thousands of volts of electricity in its capacitor, even after the microwave oven has been unplugged. That's more than 30 wall outlets combined.

The cost to purchase a new microwave is often comparable to the cost of replacement parts, so a new unit can be the best solution. Non-electronic microwave parts like door latches or glass trays are inexpensive and easy to replace. 

Source: RepairClinic.com, which provides free repair guides and more than 600 how-to videos on its website www.repairclinic.com.

