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# Time to give `dry' subject some respect

Damaged vent pipes are unsafe Upgrades offer safe hookups

Shoddy dryer vents fire hazard

**New hardware allows for safe, quality hookup**

Clothes dryer vents have got to be one of the last things that builders consider when they're putting a house together, and it shows. Take a look behind just about any dryer and you'll see what I mean. Crumpled flexible ducting gasps to survive as it snakes its way toward an ill-located exit hole, crushed against the back of a dryer pushed too close to the wall. But thankfully, the hardware necessary to complete a safe, first-rate, crumple-proof dryer hookup now exists.

Considering the stakes involved, the topic of dryer vent connections deserves a lot more attention than it typically gets. Poor quality dryer connections waste energy, slow drying time and can admit enough cold air to encase the indoor portion of the vent in frozen condensation during ultra-cold weather. Bad vents can even set homes on fire.

More than 15,000 dryer fires occur each year across North America, and many of these can be traced back to crumpled vent pipes that trap tinder-dry lint. And in the case of gas-fired dryers, bad vents even pose the hazard of carbon monoxide making its way into your home. Both ends of most dryer vents usually beg for an upgrade, and I've discovered two pieces of hardware that make safety and quality easy to achieve.

The first is something called the **Dryer Box (<http://www.dryerbox.com>; 888-443-7937)**. It's a stamped steel tray that creates a recess within the wall behind your dryer. Smooth, low-friction steel dryer ducting ends inside the box, creating a space where the flexible duct that connects to your dryer remains safe and protected. You can even push your dryer right up to the wall and the flexible ducting remains unharmed. Although the product is made in the United States, it's available here in Canada.

Dryer Box is shallow enough that it allows one inch of rigid foam insulation to be installed behind it when recessed into an exterior wall. This detail is essential in cold climates. Without it, condensation and ice form on the steel during winter.

During installation, take the time to seal the area where the dryer box meets the wall and where the metal dryer vent pipe exits the box. It's essential that warm, moist indoor air be prevented from entering the wall cavity. Forget this seemingly small matter and condensation will appear within wall cavities, promoting internal mould and rot. Our cold winters are another reason to take a second look at the other side of your dryer vent, the place where it ends outdoors. This is where you'll probably find a plastic vent flap that's supposed to stop cold air from back-drafting into your dryer and your house.

Trouble is, I've never seen a plastic flap vent that actually worked. Just open up the dryer on a cold day and you'll agree. It's typically cold enough in there to safely store milk and eggs between loads of laundry. This is because the slightest breeze flips the lightweight flap up, letting enough cold air indoors to create significant ice build-up on the outside of many dryer vents as it makes its way to your machine.

Walking through a Home Depot after Christmas, I spotted a promising alternative to traditionally ineffective plastic-flap dryer vents. It's called Covent and it looks unremarkable on the surface. But flip it over and you'll find a system of rigid foam insulation that surrounds a foam sealing ball. The design looks terrific and I'll be reporting to you on its real-world performance later this year.

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