

Fully Involved
May 2010

Spring is here...So is Spring cleaning.

With spring here it's time for cleaning. The nice weather usually prompts us to be outside cleaning our flowerbeds, mowing the lawn, spreading beauty bark, and sprucing up around the house. While undertaking the task of spring cleaning I would like to throw out a few items can increase fire safety for you, your family and your home. Fire District 2 recently responded to two separate fires involving bathroom heat lamp and/or exhaust fans. This has prompted me to spend this month talking about the hidden dangers of your fans, heaters, and dryer vents.

In my home I seldom think and act to clean my bathroom fan. The fact is, any fan produces heat. Moving metal parts equals heat. Failure to maintain these in proper working order can result in heat buildup and eventually fire. So how do we maintain fans? As always follow manufactures recommendations but here are some common ways. After making sure that the power is OFF, remove dust from fan blades, shaft and intake areas. Make sure that the fan spins freely. Clean dust from adjacent areas around fan, or operating gear. If you have a heat lamp/fan combination make sure that the heat lamp is the appropriate size make and model for the unit. This can be done by looking inside the ceiling mounted fan box or searching the internet with the fan model number. There is a huge risk of fire if the incorrect heat lamp is wrongly placed into a fan unit.

Usually I talk about cleaning your heaters at summers end however, this year I would like to cover this topic prior to spring. With these nice days comes cold mornings. Cold mornings mean heaters coming on. Wall heaters such as Cadet or King brand heaters are individually controlled by thermostats that are not always off. Thermostats will activate at low temperatures usually around 55 degrees turning your heaters on. Why is this important? If you do not keep you heater clean, and they come on one cold morning this could start a fire. So, make sure you heater is off by turning off the breaker switch, open the cover, vacuum out the fan, assembly, and housing. Dust off the grate and replace. You are now safe to turn on the breaker switch. For me, I usually leave the switch off during the summer months to eliminate any possibility of the heaters accidentally coming on.

Last topic to cover this month is dryer vents. Yet another commonly missed spring cleaning item. Dryer fires commonly start from restricted or plugged dryer vents. By cleaning your lint trap and your dryer vent you will reduce the chances of having a fire, your clothes drying time, and even your power bill. The easiest way to clean out your vent may be to replace your dryer tube. This cost effective option can be purchased and installed in a short amount of time. Other options include commercially produced devices that clean your dryer vent similar to the way your chimney is cleaned. For these options please see my friends at either McLendon's or Mitchell's Hardware in Belfair. For a great web link on dryer safety check out: http://vcisafety.org/dryer_vent_fires.cfm

As always we at Fire District 2 hope you and your family have a safe and fun filled spring and good luck with the lake fishing. More information on no cost address signs or other services Mason County Fire District 2 offers can be obtained on the Mason County Fire District 2 web page at WWW.MCFD2.COM or by calling 360-275-6711.

Question of the month: How many dryer fires are there annually? The first email or phone call that I receive with the correct answer will receive a gift from Starbucks Coffee.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2's community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education though out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.