

June 15, 2006

NHPUC
EPAB
21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10
Concord, NH 03301-2429

Dear EPAB:

In New England, if you don't have central air conditioning or use electricity as your main system for heating, only the refrigerator accounts for more domestic energy consumption than the washer and dryer.

In New England and the Middle Atlantic and Pacific regions, where apartments are more common than in the United States as a whole and where appliances are more likely to be shared, fewer households have clothes dryers. In those households that do have their own clothes dryers, electric dryers are much more common than natural gas dryers. Per-household consumption of electricity in 2001 was 903 kWh in New England, compared to 1,079 kWh nationwide. In New England, clothes dryers accounted for 7.3 percent of total household electricity consumption, in 2001; clothes washers accounted for 1.3 percent.

Gas clothes dryers were found in 17 percent of households nationwide and in 11 percent of households in New England in 2001. Nationally and in New England, the shares of gas clothes dryers were 3 percentage points higher in 2001 than in 1980. However, there were fluctuations in the shares during the intervening years, and no long-term trends were verifiable.

Our message has been shared with the public in O Magazine this month (attached) and we direct you to an article, for the record, which can be found at <http://www.grist.org/news/counter/2002/12/05/up/>.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), dryers and washing machines were involved in an average of 13,300 home structure fires per year between 1999 and 2002. These fires caused an average of 10 deaths, 280 injuries and \$97 million in direct property damage per year. Clothes dryers and washing machines were involved in 4% of the home structure fires reported between 1999 and 2002. Clothes dryers accounted for 93% of the fires; washing machines 4%, and washer and dryer combinations accounted for 3%. The leading cause of home clothes dryer and washer fires was failure to clean (30%), followed by unclassified mechanical failure or malfunction (19%). Sixteen percent were caused by some type of electrical failure or short circuit. Almost one third (31%) of these fires started with the ignition of clothing. In one quarter (24%), dust, fiber, or lint was the first item ignited.¹¹

Project Laundry List receives letters from people all over the nation, complaining that their community prevents or severely restricts the placement of clotheslines. Just in the last few weeks, we have received these comments:

- "I have always had clotheslines, but am now forbidden to do the right thing by my clothes and by the environment!"
- "We received a letter welcoming us to the neighborhood but telling us it had been brought to their attention that we use a clothesline in our backyard. They claim that clotheslines adversely affect the appearance and home values of the neighborhood. We were asked to not dry our clothes outside. This is only a homeowners' 'club' so they have no legal power to enforce the no-clothesline-rule."

The purpose of the forum to which this letter is being submitted is to identify key energy issues for Legislative and Executive action in order to combat in the present the effects of dramatic increases in energy costs and to develop for the future a state energy policy premised on the fundamental goals of security, affordability and sustainability. To that end, we ask that the EPAB:

- review the reports available at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/reps/contents.html> and <http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/HPTOC.pdf> to inform their policy decisions.

- recommend legislation that will establish a right to dry. Laws already exist in Florida and Utah and a bill was brought before the Vermont legislature in 1999.^[2]
- recommend that the Governor speak about New England virtues of thrift and frugality, encouraging people in his public addresses to examine their own energy consumption, especially with regard to clothes washing and drying.
- recommend that the Governor speak about obesity and the physical benefits of manual labor, like hanging out clothes.
- recommend that the Governor's Office of Energy & Planning be instructed to determine the number of communities that currently prohibit clothesline use in New Hampshire.
- recommend that the Governor's Office of Energy & Planning be instructed to study the full cost of using a clothesline versus the full cost of owning and operating an electric or gas dryer.
- recommend that the public utilities, as part of their energy efficiency programs, consistently remind ratepayers that the use of cold water during the clothes washing process and clotheslines during the clothes drying process will save money and our environment, contributing to the goals of security, affordability and sustainability.
- recommend that the public utilities educate consumers about the high-risk of fire associated with clothes dryers and other appliances.

Walk in balance,



Alexander P. Lee
Executive Director

Project Laundry List

www.laundrylist.org • (603) 226-3098 (home & fax)

^[1] NFPA's U.S.Home Product Report: Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires, November, 2005.

² See

http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch0163/SEC04.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch0163->Section%2004 and Utah Code and Constitution/Title 10 -- Utah Municipal And Utah Code and Constitution/Title 17 -- Counties/Title 17 Chapter 27a -- County Land Use, Development, and Management Act/17-27a-610 Restrictions for solar and other energy devices and Utah Code and Constitution/Title 10 -- Utah Municipal Code/Title 10 Chapter 09a -- Municipal Land Use, Development, and Management/10-9a-610 Restrictions for solar and other energy devices. See <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/DOCS/2000/BILLS/INTRO/S-041.HTM>.

^[1] NFPA's U.S.Home Product Report: Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires, November, 2005.

^[2] See

http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch0163/SEC04.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch0163->Section%2004 and Utah Code and Constitution/Title 10 -- Utah Municipal And Utah Code and Constitution/Title 17 -- Counties/Title 17 Chapter 27a -- County Land Use, Development, and Management

Act/17-27a-610 Restrictions for solar and other energy devices and Utah Code and Constitution/Title 10 -- Utah Municipal Code/Title 10 Chapter 09a -- Municipal Land Use, Development, and Management/10-9a-610 Restrictions for solar and other energy devices. See <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/DOCS/2000/BILLS/INTRO/S-041.HTM>.