

M2183

Posted on 14.05.2024 by Adam Parnell

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Report Title Fire in the laundry room

Initial Report

Directly after some tea towels had been in the tumble dryer, they were put in a plastic garbage bag and placed on top of it. After some time, the fire/smoke detector in the laundry room was activated, and the crew was alerted. When entering the laundry room, they noticed smoke from the plastic bag. They managed to put out the smouldering fire with an extinguisher.

Comment

Placing hot towels or boiler suits that have not cooled down sufficiently and may still contain oil /grease residues in the fabric in a plastic bag on top of a tumble dryer creates the conditions for spontaneous combustion, which is a common cause of shipboard laundry fires.

Spontaneous combustion occurs when a combustible material with traces of oil/grease in the fibre heats up and reaches its ignition temperature, involving oxygen in the air (oxidation). The oxidation of the flammable material creates the heat.

It is essential to ensure that the tea towels are properly hot washed to remove the grease and oily residues on the cloth before drying them in a tumble dryer. The appropriate type of detergent should be used to ensure they are clean of oily residues.

The tumble dryer should be set appropriately to ensure that the towels go through a proper cycle, including the cooling cycle, so they are not hot when the cycle is completed. The filters in the tumble dryers should be cleaned before each cycle. Blocked filters prevent good airflow and prevent drying of the clothes during the cycle. They should then be separated, placed in the drying room on completion, and never placed on top of the drying machines.

Laundry rooms are particularly high-risk environments for fire, and the cleanliness of the machinery is essential to prevent fires. Detector heads, ventilation fans, fire-fighting appliances (FFA), and suitable door-closing arrangements must be adequately maintained to mitigate the fire risk. Regular fire drills should be carried out in this area to train the crew to be alert to the potential for fire.

Given their high use, the equipment should be considered for replacement every five years during a

docking period.

Key Issues

Local practices: Follow well-established laundry cleaning procedures and do not adhere to unsafe practices. If you see practices that differ from what you have been trained to do, speak up.

Alerting—Alert those responsible when you see something that is not safe. How often have you visited the laundry room and seen unsafe conditions? Did you report them?



