

Appliance Safety Tips

Major household appliances can make your lives easier, but if they are not used correctly or kept in good working order, they can cause injury or death and put your homes at risk. According to the most recent report from the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. consumers have reported approximately 17,700 home fires involving clothes dryers or washing machines, resulting in 15 deaths, 360 injuries and \$194 million in property damage. As major appliances become more energy efficient, you may consider purchasing a new appliance to reduce your energy costs. The following tips will help you determine if your current appliances are safe for continued use and make smart decisions when purchasing new ones.

1. **Read the owners' manual or users' guide:** Do not ignore or take these resources for granted. They provide essential information to keep you safe when using an appliance. Underwriters Laboratories (UL) mandates that manufacturers place safety tips within the first two pages of their manuals.
2. **Only use as intended:** Using appliances for activities other than what they are designed for poses risks, including electrical, fire and mechanical hazards. For example, the clothes dryer is used for fabrics - nothing more.
3. **Trust your instincts:** If an appliance smells, sounds or functions strangely - be suspicious. This is a likely indicator you should replace the problem appliance or at least have it checked out by a licensed technician.
4. **Inspect your appliances:** Search your appliances inside and out, checking for potential hazards, such as frayed cords and external damage. Pay attention to if it functions as well as it should.
5. **Shop for safety to protect your family:** Give yourself peace of mind that your family will be safe when using home appliances. Purchase appliances listed by an accredited third-party safety testing and certification organization such as UL. UL-LISTED products have been rigorously tested and are evaluated for potential risk of fire, shock, and/or personal injury.
6. **Follow preventative maintenance measures:** Lack of preventative maintenance is a contributing factor to some appliance malfunctions and fires. Simple ways to keep your appliances in peak performance include never overloading the clothes washer; periodically removing debris from the dishwasher filter; and immediately unplugging the vacuum cleaner and dislodging items that should not have been picked up.
7. **Keep them clean:** Clean appliances tend to "live" longer. Scrub your oven regularly and don't allow heavy grease to buildup on the interior. Clean the condenser coils of your refrigerator and exhaust duct of your clothes dryer at least annually. Also, remove lint from the clothes dryer filter every time you run it.
8. **Seek sustainable products:** Most appliances today advertise energy savings that may not be fully accurate. Some manufacturers are working toward developing truly sustainable and environmentally sound products. UL Environment (ULE), a wholly owned subsidiary of UL, validates environmental claims and certifies to UL standards. You also should check for the ENERGY STAR label to make sure your appliances meet government energy efficiency requirements.
9. **Properly dispose of your old appliances:** Leaving old appliances curbside can pollute the Earth, as toxic chemicals inside the units may seep into the air and waterways. Donate old appliances that are still safe for use or find a new owner in your community. Your local municipality may provide a financial incentive to recycle old appliances, and the retailer where you purchased the appliance may offer a pick-up service if the product can no longer be used. Remove or otherwise secure doors to refrigerators and other appliances that may suffocate curious children.
10. **Just look for the UL Mark.** The UL Mark is one of the most widely recognized and trusted safety symbols among consumers worldwide, and confirms a product has been tested and certified to meet the highest standard in safety. To determine if your appliances are UL-Listed, visit UL's [Online Certifications Directory](#).