

Auto-ignition of laundry items

Safety Flash Published on 23 August 2018 Generated on 22 January 2025 IMCA SF 18/18

Cloths used for general galley cleaning were removed from a tumble dryer, immediately folded and piled in a steel bucket.

What happened?

Three hours later they were stowed in a cupboard. After a further three hours (six hours after removing the cloths from the dryer) a burning smell and the presence of smoke were reported. Upon investigation, the cloths were found smouldering. Immediate action was taken, and no further damage was noted.



What went wrong? What were the causes?

- Following the fire, it was discovered that the cloths were still contaminated. This indicates that the items had been washed at the wrong temperature (40°C instead of 90°C) to reduce the wash time. This was not sufficient for them to be fully cleaned.
- Either the cloths were removed from the tumble dryer prior to completion of the full cool down cycle or the wrong temperature setting was used (too high). As a result, the hot contaminated cloths were not cooled before being stowed. This led to them starting to smoulder.

What actions were taken? What lessons were learned?

- Ensure items are washed at suitable temperatures to remove residue.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Energy isolation

- Ensure that the correct temperature setting is selected and that cool-down cycles are completed when using tumble dryers.
- Hot laundry should never be folded and stowed. Allow suitable time for cooling down.
- Discard cloths that can no longer be cleaned.
- Reiterate these lessons to all catering crew.



IMCA notes that this is an 'evergreen' safety issue that has come up often before. Our members may wish to bring this potentially serious issue once again to the attention of their management and crew.

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