

Fire in laundry tumble drier



Description of Process:

The fire occurred inside the drum of one of the laundry tumble dryers. The unit was more than 10 years old and was put through approx. 20 drying cycles per day, 365 days per year.

Description of Incident:

A fire in #1 tumble dryer in the platform laundry was caused by the contents of the dryer drum (coveralls) igniting. The fire was identified by fixed platform detection systems and extinguished by the Emergency Response Team. All platform personnel went to muster stations and production was shut down.

The tumble dryer heating element contactor had stuck in the closed position, meaning that at the end of the drying cycle, heating continued instead of the machine switching into a short cooling cycle.

The safety cut-out design relied on the stuck contactor being able to open, and so failed to operate. Heating of the drum contents therefore continued until the coveralls ignited.

There was no one present in the laundry room at the end of the drying cycle so the coveralls were not immediately removed from the dryer at end of cycle.

SAFETY ALERT

Good Practice Guidance:

- Establish clear maintenance guidance for tumble dryers including inspection and replacement of heating element contactors.
- Review tumble dryer safety cut-out design and consider replacing if design relies on single contactor which has potential to stick in closed position.
- Facilities contractor procedures should require that a steward is always present in the laundry at the end of each tumble dryer drying cycle.
- Fit smoke detector in laundry.
- For more information see: HSE Offshore Information Sheet 3/2009 Tumble dryer fires in laundry rooms - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/infosheets/is3-2009.htm>