

Consumer Information on Clothes Washers and Odor, Mold and Mildew

Advancements in clothes washer technology have led to dramatic decreases in energy and water consumption while the average tub volume has increased over time. A new high efficiency unit compared to a 10-year old clothes washer will save more than 5000 gallons of water per year, and nearly \$135 in operating costs from decreased electrical consumption.

Like all household appliances, clothes washers require regular cleaning and maintenance by the consumer. Because all clothes washing machines have the potential to have some amount of odor, mold and mildew after a period of use, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) offers the tips below to help consumers perform this simple routine maintenance.

Potential causes of odor, mold and mildew may include:

- Washing machines generally are kept in somewhat closed and damp environments, such as laundry rooms and basements.
- The laundry that is put into them has a wide variety of organic materials.
- Modern high-efficiency washing machines use less water and are more tightly sealed when the door or lid is closed.
- Over time, changes have occurred in consumer laundry habits including the use of less bleach, more fabric softener, and more frequent cold water wash cycles. These habits may impact the accumulation of bio-film and other residues, increasing the potential for odor, mold and mildew.

Consumers can take several simple steps to control odor, mold and mildew:

- Follow the instructions in the use and care guide for your washing machine.
- Increased air flow greatly reduces the development of mold and mildew. Consult your use and care guide for additional instructions on this topic.
- Always remove wet items from the washer promptly after the machine stops running. Wet fabric left in a closed space is particularly conducive to the development of odor, mold and mildew.
- Use only the amount of detergent recommended on the detergent container. If your washer is a high-efficiency machine that recommends use of "HE" (high-efficiency) detergent, use **only** HE detergent, not regular detergent. Regular detergent may generate excessive suds in high-efficiency machines, and the excessive suds can leave a film that is conducive to the development of odor, mold and mildew. Excessive suds do not make your clothes cleaner.

If specific cleaning instructions are not included, to help maintain a clean machine it is good practice to use a cup of chlorine bleach or a commercially available washing machine cleaner and hot water without any laundry once a month.

Always use precaution if children are present in the household, as children should never play near or on appliances.