

# Information Bulletin

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## Fire Extinguishers

Choosing the right fire extinguisher and knowing how to use it properly and safely can make a difference between putting out a small fire or having a major catastrophe. If the right fire extinguisher is used, small fires can be contained and extinguished before they can cause injury to people or damage to property.

There are four classes of fire. Class A fires are ordinary combustibles or fibrous material, such as wood, cloth, rubber and some plastics. Class B fires are flammable or combustible liquids, such as, gasoline, acetone, thinners, and kerosene. Class C fires are energized electrical fires, such as appliances, switches, panel boxes and power tools. Class D fires are combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium and sodium. Class D fires react violently with water or other chemicals, and must be handled with care.

Fire extinguishers are rated according to the type of fire they can put out. This information is listed prominently on the extinguisher. Take a few minutes to become familiar with the location of extinguishers, type of fire extinguisher you have, and type of fires you could expect in your workplace. Your local fire department can assist you with the type of fire extinguishers needed and where to locate each extinguisher.

Fire extinguishers should be mounted on a wall. The top of the extinguisher may be a maximum of 5 feet from the ground if it weighs less than 40 pounds. Extinguishers over 40 pounds should be mounted no higher than 3 1/5 feet. Access to the extinguisher should be unrestricted and the extinguisher should be in plain view. Do not hang clothing or other material on the extinguisher.

Fire extinguishers should be serviced annually by a licensed extinguisher company. You should inspect extinguishers monthly. Make sure that the safety pin, nozzle and nameplate are intact. Look at the gauge and feel the weight. Is the extinguisher full? Does it need to be recharged? Check for the seal on the safety pin. Has the extinguisher been tampered with or used? Keep a record of monthly inspections on the back of the annual service tag. Any empty or damaged fire extinguishers should be promptly serviced. Missing fire extinguishers should be replaced immediately.

There is no substitution for hands on training when it comes to learning how to use a dry chemical extinguisher. You will want to remember the phrase "PASS" when using this type of extinguisher. *P* - Pull the pin. *A* - Aim the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the flames. *S* - Squeeze the trigger, while holding the extinguisher upright. *S* - Sweep the extinguisher from side to side covering the area of the fire with the extinguishing agent.

"PASS" may work for a majority of extinguishers but there is always the exception. Some extinguishers operate differently read and understand all the instructions before a fire emergency happens.

Remember to always sound the fire alarm or tell someone to call the fire department before trying to extinguish the fire. Your safety and the safety of others depend upon your actions.