

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.

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.

Class K fires are combustible cooking media (vegetable or animal oils and fats)

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, where to locate each extinguisher and training.

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 not be mounted more than 3 1/2 feet above the floor. The extinguisher location should be marked, have unrestricted access and be in plain view. Do not hang clothing or other material on the extinguisher.

Locate a Class K portable fire extinguisher within 30 feet of cooking operations*. Affix a placard near the extinguisher that states that the automatic extinguishing system should be activated prior to using the extinguisher.

Service and Inspection

A licensed extinguisher company should service fire extinguishers annually with the service date noted on a tag affixed to the extinguisher. You should visually 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? Ensure that the seal on the safety pin has not been tampered with. Keep a record of monthly inspections on the back of the annual service tag attached to the extinguisher. Any empty or damaged fire extinguishers should be promptly serviced and missing extinguishers replaced promptly.

PASS

There is no substitution for hands on training when it comes to learning how to use an extinguisher. You will want to remember the phrase "PASS" when using an 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.

**Existing dry chemical extinguishers without a Class K listing that were installed for the protection of Class K hazards shall be replaced with an extinguisher having Class K listing when the dry chemical extinguishers become due for either a 6-year maintenance or hydrostatic test.*

This bulletin is intended only as a reminder and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken.