

Fire Extinguishers

The first thing you must know about fire extinguishers is that they are meant for very, very small fires. And no matter how small the fire is, your first two actions in any fire situation should be to: Evacuate the area.

Call the fire department.

Then, if you still feel confident you can safely get the fire under control, use the fire extinguisher.

WHEN NOT TO FIGHT A FIRE...

- If the fire could block your only exit!
- If the fire is spreading too quickly!
- If the type or size of the extinguisher is wrong!
- If the fire is too large!
- If you don't know how to use your fire extinguisher!

If any of the above conditions exist, leave immediately!!!

Fire Extinguisher Ratings

Class A Extinguishers will put out fires in ordinary combustibles, such as wood and paper. The numerical rating for this class of fire extinguisher refers to the amount of water the fire extinguisher holds and the amount of fire it will extinguish.

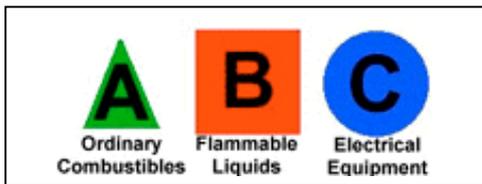
Class B Extinguishers should be used on fires involving flammable liquids, such as grease, gasoline, oil, etc. The numerical rating for this class of fire extinguisher states the approximate number of square feet of a flammable liquid fire that a non-expert person can expect to extinguish.

Class C Extinguishers are suitable for use on electrically energized fires. This class of fire extinguishers does not have a numerical rating. The presence of the letter "C" indicates that the extinguishing agent is non-conductive.

Class D Extinguishers are designed for use on flammable metals and are often specific for the type of metal in question. There is no picture designator for Class D extinguishers. These extinguishers generally have no rating nor are they given a multi-purpose rating for use on other types of fires.

Multi-Class Ratings

Many extinguishers available today can be used on different types of fires and will be labeled with more than one designator, e.g. A-B, B-C, or A-B-C. Make sure that if you have a multi-purpose extinguisher it is properly labeled.



This is the old style of labeling indicating suitability for use on Class A, B, and C fires.



This is the new style of labeling that shows this extinguisher may be used on Ordinary Combustibles, Flammable

Liquids, or Electrical Equipment fires. This is the new labeling style with a diagonal red line drawn through the picture to indicate what type of fire this extinguisher is NOT suitable for.



In this example, the fire extinguisher could be used on Ordinary Combustibles and Flammable Liquids fires, but not

for Electrical Equipment fires.

Types of Fire Extinguishers

Dry Chemical extinguishers are usually rated for multiple purpose use. They contain an extinguishing agent and use a compressed, non-flammable gas as a propellant.

Halon extinguishers contain a gas that interrupts the chemical reaction that takes place when fuels burn. These types of extinguishers are often used to protect valuable electrical equipment since they leave no residue to clean up. Halon extinguishers have a limited range, usually 4 to 6 feet. The initial application of Halon should be made at the base of the fire, even after the flames have been extinguished.

Water These extinguishers contain water and compressed gas and should only be used on Class A (ordinary combustibles) fires.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) extinguishers are most effective on Class B and C (liquids and electrical) fires. Since the gas disperses quickly, these extinguishers are only effective from 3 to 8 feet. The carbon dioxide is stored as a compressed liquid in the extinguisher; as it expands, it cools the surrounding air. The cooling will often cause ice to form around the “horn” where the gas is expelled from the extinguisher. Since the fire could re-ignite, continue to apply the agent even after the fire appears to be out.

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Even though extinguishers come in a number of shapes and sizes, they all operate in a similar manner. Here's an easy acronym for remembering fire extinguisher use:

P A S S -- Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep



Pull the pin at the top of the extinguisher that keeps the handle from being accidentally pressed.

Aim the nozzle toward the base of the fire.

Stand approximately 8 feet away from the fire and **squeeze** the handle to discharge the extinguisher. If you release the handle, the discharge will stop.

Sweep the nozzle back and forth at the base of the fire. After the fire appears to be out, watch it carefully since it may re-ignite!

Maintaining your Fire Extinguishers

Your fire extinguishers should be inspected and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Inspections

Your fire extinguishers should be inspected upon installation and then monthly thereafter at a minimum. You should check at least the following:

The extinguisher is in its designated place and its operating instructions face outward.

Access to the extinguisher is not blocked.

Operating instructions can be read.

Any seals or tamper indicators are not broken, missing, or in need of replacement.

Pressure gauge or indicating devices, if provided, are in the operable range or position.

There is no evidence of corrosion or physical damage.

Maintenance

Manufacturer's instructions specify the servicing of rechargeable fire extinguishers after any use. The frequency of internal maintenance and testing when the extinguisher has not been used is specified in the owner's manual.

Maintenance and servicing of fire extinguishers should be performed by fire extinguisher servicing companies that have the proper tools, recharge materials, lubricants, manufacturer's servicing instructions, and replacement parts.

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