

WHEN AND HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

1. CHOOSE THE CORRECT EXTINGUISHER

All portable fire extinguishers must be approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) or Factory Mutual Research (FM) to verify compliance with applicable standards, found in 8 CCR Sections 1922 and 6151. Equipment that passes the laboratory's tests are labeled and given an alpha-numeric classification based on the type and size of fire it will extinguish. For example, look at the label pictured.



The letters (A, B, and C) represent the type(s) of fire for which the extinguisher has been approved. The number in front of the A rating indicates how much water the extinguisher is equal to and represents 1.25 gallons of water for every unit of one. The number in front of the B rating represents the area in square feet of a class B fire that a non-expert user should be able to extinguish.

The 5 Classes of Fire

Fires are categorized into the classes of the fuel that feeds them. Each class of fire can be extinguished by a particular type of fire extinguisher.

Class A: Ordinary Combustibles.



Examples: paper, wood, cloth, and plastics

Control Method: Cool it! (remove heat)

Extinguisher to use: _____

Class B: Flammable Liquids:



Examples: Oil(s), gasoline, paint related materials and solvents.

Control Methods: Remove oxygen, break the chemical reaction, reduce heat.

Extinguisher to use: _____

NOTE: Never use water to extinguish flammable liquid fires. Water is extremely ineffective at extinguishing this type of fire and may make matters worse by the spreading the fire.

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Class C: Electrical Equipment:

Example: Energized electrical equipment.

Control method: Remove the fuel (de-energize or unplug electricity) or use a non-conductive material to extinguish it.



Extinguisher to use: _____

NOTE: Never use water to extinguish an electrical fire. Water is a good conductor and may lead to electrocution if used to extinguish an electrical fire. Electrical equipment must be unplugged and/or de-energized before using a water extinguisher on an electrical fire.

Class D: Metals

Example: Magnesium and other combustible metals.



Extinguisher to use: _____

Class K: Restaurants (Grease/cooking oil)

Example: Cooking grease, cooking oil

A pot of cooking oil placed on a stove burner at high heat can overheat and the vapors could ignite. These types of fires are very fast spreading and most destructive.



Extinguisher to use: _____

What rating of fire extinguisher(s) is/are at this site? _____

What rating of fire extinguisher should I have at home? _____

Where is the closest fire extinguisher to my work site? _____

NOTES:

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2. SHOULD YOU USE THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER?

WHEN IN DOUBT – DON'T!!!

Your safety is always the most important consideration. When confronted with a potential fire situation, always ensure make sure you have an exit close by. As fire will grow and move, it can overtake and block an exit within seconds. Always keep that in mind.

Some simple rules about when to use a fire extinguisher are:

- ✓ Ensure that you have a way out. The fire may come between you and your exit.
- ✓ Ensure everyone who can has left the area and gone to a safe location.
- ✓ Ensure that the fire department **has been** notified.
- ✓ Ensure that you are not exposed to heat or smoke.
- ✓ Make sure that you have the correct extinguisher for the type of fire Approach the fire while staying low, under any smoke



3. THE P.A.S.S. METHOD

- ✓ **P**ull the pin
- ✓ **A**im the extinguisher at the base of fire
- ✓ **S**queeze the handle
- ✓ **S**weep from side to side

Once the fire appears to be out, shut off the extinguisher. Watch where the fire was to ensure that it is completely out. Never turn your back and walk away. The fire could reignite. Should the fire start again (rekindle), use the extinguisher (P.A.S.S.) again.

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4. CARE AND FEEDING OF A FIRE EXTINGUISHER:

Just like with any other piece of safety equipment, care must be taken to ensure that the extinguisher is where it needs to be, and in the best condition, ready to use should you ever need it.

- √ Weekly, give it a “hug”. Regularly handle your fire extinguisher, including picking it up off the mounting and shaking it to prevent the chemicals from compacting at the bottom.
- √ Monthly, check the gauge to make sure there will be enough pressure to expel the extinguishing agent when you need it (and this is a good time to shake it again). Shake it again, and initial the monthly inspection tag.
- √ Yearly, have the extinguisher serviced by a professional. It will then be disassembled, and all valves and rings checked.

Store the extinguisher in a visible place. Don't hang anything on or over it, preventing accessibility.

5. LOCATIONS:

Extinguishers will frequently be found in industrial vehicles, mechanical rooms, offices, computer labs, and flammable liquid storage areas.



They should be hung near exits in: public hallways, laboratories, mechanical rooms, break rooms, chemical storage areas, offices, commercial vehicles, and other areas with flammable liquids.

At home: Your extinguisher should be mounted or placed in a location with the same eye to your personal safety as at work. Extinguishers are well placed in kitchens and garages, next to exits. You never want to walk away from any exit to grab the extinguisher in an emergency.