

It Goes Where?

Where are you supposed to put a fire extinguisher in the workplace? Are there rules? How are you supposed to know?

Like with many safety concepts, there are rules, regulations, standards, and requirements on what fire extinguisher you have and where it goes. A good place to start looking, is in the OSHA regulation, [29 CFR 1910.157 \(linked here for your convenience\)](#). Here are the basic requirements.

1. Access it safely - on the way out. This applies to home as well as in the workplace. The regulation states it is to be readily accessible. When there is a fire, you want to ensure that you are able to exit quickly, should the fire grow out of control and/or get between you and an exit before you can extinguish it. If the extinguisher is on the your way out or to the exit, you are safer even before you grab the extinguisher.

2. Make it easy to grab quickly - on a wall with the handle facing out, somewhere between 3-1/2 to 5 feet from the floor. In the OSHA etool on Evacuation Plans and Procedures is a page on installation of extinguishers. [Here is a link to the page](#). Scroll down the page for a diagram of how to hang a fire extinguisher.

3. Which Unit Goes Where? - That depends on what Class of fire you might encounter. (There's a downloadable pdf of the safety tip from 10/5/09 with a description of the Classes of Fires on our website at [SCM-Safety.com under the Tips of the Week](#).) Remember that you must have the appropriately rated fire extinguisher for the Class of Fire(s) at your workplace or home. From 29 CFR 1910.157 (d) and the OSHA etool:

For Class A (ordinary combustibles), extinguishers must be within a 75 foot walking distance.

For Class B (oils, flammable liquids, etc), extinguishers must be placed within a 50 foot walking distance.

For Class D (flammable metals) extinguishers must be within a 75 foot walking distance.

For Class K (cooking oils, fats, etc), extinguishers must be within 30 foot walking distance.

Remember that Class C (electrical current) is most often combined with Class A and/or B.

If you are in construction, you are required to have a 2A rated fire extinguisher every 100 feet ([29 CFR 1926.150\(c\)](#)).

4. Keep it clear. When OSHA states in 1910.157 that extinguishers are to be readily accessible, it also means that they must be kept clear of coats, umbrellas, stacked materials, chairs, and any of the other items that find their way on and around extinguishers. If you have to dig to get to a fire extinguisher, you may waste valuable time.

5. Tell 'Em How To Use It. Paragraph (g) to the regulation states that if you expect your employees to use a fire extinguisher, you must provide training on that extinguisher. It's a good idea to review the procedures for extinguishing fires with your family too.

Next week, we will conclude Fire Prevention Month with information on how to control a fire - not just at work, but also at home!