

Fire Extinguishers

You've seen them everywhere. But, do you know when and how to use one?

A fire extinguisher is a first aid device used in fire fighting. It is not a substitute for calling the fire department. Fire extinguishers should only be used on small fires just discovered. Should you discover a fire, follow these procedures:

- Remove people from the immediate area of danger.
- Sound the alarm by pulling the pull station if you have one. Someone should be designated to call the fire department immediately, 911.
- Attempt to extinguish fire only if you have been trained to use an extinguisher and the fire is small.
- If you cannot extinguish or the fire is too large, confine the fire by closing the doors as you leave the building.
- Even if you believe you have the fire out, let the fire department come out and check it.

Types of Fire Extinguishers

The most common extinguishers are water (type A), carbon dioxide (type BC), and multi-purpose dry chemical (type ABC). Fire extinguishers are labeled according to the type of fire on which it may be used. Using one type of extinguisher on the wrong type of fire could be dangerous and result in making matters even worse. Fire extinguishers are labeled type A, B, C, D or K and indicate the type of fire on which the extinguisher can be used.

Class A Fire

A class A fire involves ordinary combustibles like paper, wood, and cloth. You can remember class A for any substance that leaves an ash. A for Ashes.

Class B Fire

A class B fire involves flammable liquids like oil, gasoline, grease, or paints. Flammable liquids come in barrels. You can remember B for Barrels.

Class C Fire

A class C fire is an electrical fire, such as wiring, appliances etc. You can remember C for Current.

Class D Fire

A class D fire involves combustible metals, such as magnesium, potassium, and sodium. They require special extinguishing agents, and the general public should not attempt to extinguish this type of fire. You can remember class D for Don't try to extinguish.

Class K Fire

A class K fire involves cooking oils in commercial cooking equipment.

Fire extinguishers come in a variety of ratings. For a type A water extinguisher, a 2 would represent 2 ½ gallons of water, 3 would be 3 ¾ gallons. For type B, the number represents the square feet the extinguisher is rated to extinguish. For example, type 10BC, represents 10 square feet, 5BC is 5 square feet. For home use a 2A10BC would be good to have. It weighs 5-6 pounds. If used properly it would extinguish the three most common fires in the home. The extinguisher should be mounted near an exit.

Using a Fire Extinguisher

How to use an extinguisher is best remembered by the acronym P.A.S.S., for Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep.

- **P**ull the pin at the top of the cylinder. You may have to twist pin first to break plastic seal.
- **A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire, not in the flames.
- **S**queeze the handle.
- **S**weep the nozzle at the base of the fire from side to side until it goes out.

Stop squeezing the handle once fire is extinguished and watch for rekindling. Never turn your back to the fire.

The distance from the fire when using the extinguisher is important. Always follow the instructions on the fire extinguisher as to the distance required.

Remember to: Always approach the fire with your back to an exit. If unable to extinguish, set extinguisher down and exit the building, closing doors behind you.

Important Notes

- Know the location of the fire extinguishers at work and at home.
- Ensure they are operational by checking inspection tag and the gauge.
- Know how and when to use a fire extinguisher before a fire occurs.
- Use only after everyone is leaving the area and someone has sounded the alarm and called the fire department.
- You have an unobstructed escape at your back.
- You know what is burning and your extinguisher is right for the fire.