

Be Prepared; Be Safe - Know your Fire Extinguisher

Did you know that Fire Extinguishers have limits?

USED PROPERLY, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives.

Portable extinguishers for home use, however, aren't designed to fight large or spreading fires. Even against small fires, they're useful only under certain conditions.

- f* The operator must know how to use the extinguisher. There's no time to read directions during an emergency.
- f* The extinguisher must be within easy reach, in working order, and fully charged.
- f* The extinguisher must match the type of fire being fought.
- f* Extinguishers containing water are unsuitable for use on grease or electrical fires.
- f* The extinguisher must be large enough to put out the fire. Many portable extinguishers discharge completely in only 8 to 10 seconds.

It is important to choose your Fire Extinguisher.

SELECT ONLY fire extinguishers that have been tested in an independent laboratory and labeled for the type and size of fire they can extinguish. Use these labels as a guide to purchase the kind of extinguishers that suits your needs.

Bet you didn't know there were Classes of Fires.

There are three basic classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A red slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you only that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire.

- f* Class A: Ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth and paper.
- f* Class B: Flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil and oil-based paint.
- f* Class C: Energized electrical equipment – including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery and appliances.

The extinguisher must be appropriate for the type of fire being fought. Multi-purpose fire extinguishers, labeled ABC, may be used on all three classes of fires. If you use the wrong type of extinguisher, you could endanger yourself and make the fire worse.

In some cases, it may be dangerous to use any type of fire extinguisher. For example, an extinguishing agent released under pressure could spread a grease fire in a frying pan rather than put it out.

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Do you remember the PASS-word?

KEEP YOUR back to an unobstructed exit and stand six to eight feet (two to three metres) away from the fire. Follow the four-step PASS procedure:

- f* **PULL** the pin: This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other lever-release mechanisms.
- f* **AIM** low: Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire.
- f* **SQUEEZE** the lever above the handle:
This discharges the extinguishing agent. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever).
- f* **SWEEP** from side to side:
Moving carefully toward the fire, keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames appear to be out. Watch the fire area. If the fire re-ignites, repeat the process.

Always be sure the fire department inspects the fire site, even if you think you've extinguished the fire.

Important - Should you fight the Fire?

Before you begin to fight a fire, make sure:

- f* Everyone has left, or is leaving, the building.
- f* You've called the fire department.
- f* The fire is confined to a small area and isn't spreading.
- f* You have a clear escape route which the fire won't spread to.
- f* The extinguisher is the right type for the fire.
- f* You've read the instructions, and you know how to use the extinguisher.

It's reckless to fight a fire under any other circumstances. Instead, leave immediately and close off the area.