

Fire Extinguishers

Do you know how to operate a fire extinguisher? It could save your life or your loved ones.

A home portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. They aren't, however, designed to fight large or spreading fires and they aren't for everyone. Even against small fires, they are useful only under the right conditions.



An extinguisher must be large enough for the fire at hand, be in working order, be fully charged, be readily available, and the operator should be familiar with the extinguisher so it won't be necessary to read directions during an emergency.

Purchasing Your Extinguisher

A fire extinguisher should be "listed" and "labeled" by an independent testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratory) or FM (Factory Mutual).

The larger the rating number on an A or B fire extinguisher, the more fire it can put out. Make sure you and household members can hold and operate the extinguisher you are buying.

Extinguishers need care and must be recharged after every use. A partially used unit might as well be empty. Make sure your extinguisher is serviced and inspected according to the manufacturers instructions.



Having more than one extinguisher in your home is a good idea. Each extinguisher should be installed in plain view near an escape route and away from potential fire hazards.

Types of Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are labeled according to the type of fire on which they may be used. Using the wrong type of extinguisher on the type of fire you are trying to put out could be dangerous and make the situation even worse.

The labels A, B, C or D are used to indicate the type of fire on which an extinguisher is to be used.



Type A - Ordinary Combustibles

wood and cloth.

These include common household items such as paper,

These types of fires usually leave ashes after they burn. Think of Type A extinguishers for Ashes.



Type B - Flammable Liquids

Gasoline, oil, grease, cooking oils or fats, oil based paint and kerosene are just some of these.

These substances often come in barrels.
Remember Type B extinguishers for Barrels.



Type C - Electrical Equipment

Wall outlets, power cords, small and large appliances, wiring and fuse boxes fall under this

category. Electricity travels in currents.
Connect Type C extinguishers with Currents.



Type D – Combustible Metals

These extinguishers are used for metal fires such as magnesium, sodium or titanium.

These fires involve extremely high temperatures and are very

dangerous

and are seldom handled without assistance from the fire

department.

Remember Type D for Don't get involved.

****NOTE****

Never use a "Type A" extinguisher on flammable liquids.
This is likely to spread the fire and make it worse, or splash burning liquid onto you.

A slash through the picture means do not use on that type of fire.

Number Rating

Fire extinguishers also have a number rating. For Type A fires, a 1 would stand for the equivalent of 1 ¼ gallons of water, a 2 would represent 2 ½ gallons, 3 would be 3 ¾ gallons of water, etc. Each number adds 1 ¼ gallons equivalent of water.

For Type B and Type C fires, the number represents square feet of fire. For example, 2 would be two square feet, 5 is five square feet.

Fire extinguishers are also made to extinguish more than one type of fire. Common types are 2A5B or 2A10BC. For example, 2A5B means this extinguisher is good for Type A fires that would need 2 1/2 gallons of water to extinguish and it is also good for Type B fires that are 5 square feet in area.

A good extinguisher to have in each residential kitchen would have a rating of 2A10BC. You might also get a Type A for the living room and bedrooms and an ABC for the basement and garage.



Using a Fire Extinguisher

Here's a simple way to remember the steps to take when using a portable extinguisher. Start by standing around 8 feet back from the fire. Then follow the acronym "P.A.S.S."

PASS stands for Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep.

Pull the pin at the top of the cylinder. The pin is there as a safeguard and locks the handle.

Aim low. The nozzle should be pointed at the base of the fire.

Squeeze or press the handle. Keep in mind that most small extinguishers last only up to 25 seconds.

Sweep the contents from side to side at the base of the fire until it goes out.

Shut off the extinguisher and then watch carefully. If flames appear again, repeat the process.

When to Fight a Fire

You should only try to extinguish a fire if the following are true:

- Everyone has left, or is leaving the building, and that the fire department is being called.
- The fire is confined to a small area and is not spreading.
- You have an unobstructed escape route to which the fire will not spread.
- The extinguisher is the right type for the fire.
- You know how to use your extinguisher.

Remember, if you have the slightest doubt about using an extinguisher to fight a fire yourself - DON'T. Instead, get out, closing the door behind you to slow the spread of the fire. Your Fire Department is trained and ready to help.

