

FIRE PREVENTION

PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Equipment used to extinguish and control fires is of two types: fixed and portable. Fixed systems include water equipment (automatic sprinklers, hydrants, and standpipe hoses) and special pipe systems for dry chemical, carbon dioxide, halon, and foam. Special pipe systems are applicable to areas of high fire potential where water may not be effective, such as tanks for storage of flammable liquids and on electrical equipment.

Fixed systems, however, must be supplemented by portable fire extinguishers. These often can preclude the action of sprinkler systems because they can prevent a small fire from spreading, as well as, provide rapid extinguishment in the early stages of a fire.

Even though the facility may be equipped with automatic sprinklers or other means of fire protection, portable fire extinguishers should also be available and ready for emergency use. "Portable" is applied to manual equipment used on small incipient fires or in the interim between discovery of fire and the functioning of automatic equipment or the arrival of professional fire fighters.

Extinguisher Requirements

1. Approved by a recognized testing laboratory.
2. The right type for each class of fire that may occur in the area.
3. In sufficient quantity and size to protect against the expected exposure in the area.
4. Located where they are readily accessible for immediate use and the location is kept accessible and clearly identified.
5. Maintained in operating condition, inspected frequently, checked against tampering, and recharged as required.
6. Operable by area personnel who can find them and who are trained to use them effectively and promptly.

Extinguisher Types

Portable extinguishers are classified to indicate their ability to handle specific classes and sizes of fires. The types of extinguishers are as follows:

Class A extinguishers – foam or water for use on wood, textiles, rubbish, and ordinary combustibles.

Class B extinguishers – foam, dry chemical, or carbon dioxide for use on flammable liquid and gas fires, such as oil, gasoline, paint, and grease.

Class C extinguishers – carbon dioxide or dry chemical for use on energized electrical equipment.

Multipurpose dry chemical extinguishers – for Class A, B, and C fires.

Halon extinguishers – for use in computer rooms and electronic and electrical control rooms.

Class D extinguishers – dry powder for use on certain combustible metals.

Remember to never use a water-type extinguisher on live electrical equipment, since you can be electrocuted by the electric current following the water stream to your body. Also, never throw a stream of water on a Class B fire since you could spatter flaming liquids over a wide area.

To determine your level of readiness should a fire strike, ask yourself these three questions:

- Do you know where the nearest fire extinguisher is located?
- Do you know how the fire extinguisher works?
- Do you know which fire extinguisher to use on the fire in question?

MAKE THE CORRECT PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER DECISION!

(Revised 10/05)

