

## Fire Extinguishers Plus

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority for residents is to get out safely.

### **Safety tips:**

Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.

### **To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:**

**Pull** the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.

**Aim** low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.

**Squeeze** the lever slowly and evenly.

**Sweep** the nozzle from side-to-side.

### **For the home:**

For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.

Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory. Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out. Local fire departments or fire equipment distributors often offer hands-on fire extinguisher trainings.

Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately. Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms. NFPA does not test, label or approve any products.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

### Fire Extinguisher Ratings

Class A Extinguishers will put out fires in ordinary combustibles, such as wood and paper. The numerical rating for this class of fire extinguisher refers to the amount of water the fire extinguisher holds and the amount of fire it will extinguish.

Class B Extinguishers should be used on fires involving flammable or combustible liquids, such as grease, gasoline, oil, etc. The numerical rating for this class of fire extinguisher states the approximate number of square feet of a flammable liquid fire that a non-expert person can expect to extinguish.

Class C Extinguishers are suitable for use on electrically energized fires such as appliances, switches, panel boxes, power tools, hot plates and stirrers. This class of fire extinguishers does not have a numerical rating. The presence of the letter "C" indicates that the extinguishing agent is non-conductive.

Class D Extinguishers are designed for use on flammable metals such as magnesium, titanium, potassium and sodium as well as pyrophoric organometallic reagents such as alkylolithiums, Grignards and diethylzinc. There is no picture designator for Class D extinguishers. These extinguishers generally have no rating nor are they given a multi-purpose rating for use on other types of fires.

### **The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) classifies fires into five general categories (U.S.):**

Class A fires are ordinary materials like burning paper, lumber, cardboard, plastics etc.

Class B fires involve flammable or combustible liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, and common organic solvents

used in the laboratory.

Class C fires involve energized electrical equipment, such as appliances, switches, panel boxes, power tools, hot plates and stirrers. Water can be a dangerous extinguishing medium for class C fires because of the risk of electrical shock unless a specialized water mist extinguisher is used.

Class D fires involve combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium, potassium and sodium as well as pyrophoric organometallic reagents such as alkyllithiums, Grignards and diethylzinc. These materials burn at high temperatures and will react violently with water, air, and/or other chemicals. Handle with care!!

Class K fires are kitchen fires. This class was added to the NFPA portable extinguishers Standard 10 in 1998. Kitchen extinguishers installed before June 30, 1998 are "grandfathered" into the standard



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