



Portable Fire Extinguishers

Workplace fires and explosions kill hundreds and injure thousands of workers each year. Fire extinguishers can save lives by putting out a small fire or controlling it until the fire department arrives, but different types of fire extinguishers fight different types of fire. The information in this document will help ensure your business is prepared.

Decision to Fight

Fire extinguishers are just one part of a fire response plan. The primary element is safe escape. Every workplace should have a fire escape plan and working smoke alarms. If you are not sure it is safe to fight the fire, evacuate the building, call 911 and let the fire department control it.

You may only have moments to use a fire extinguisher properly as small fires can grow into large ones very quickly. It is important to know the following information before you decide to use fire extinguishers and fight fires.

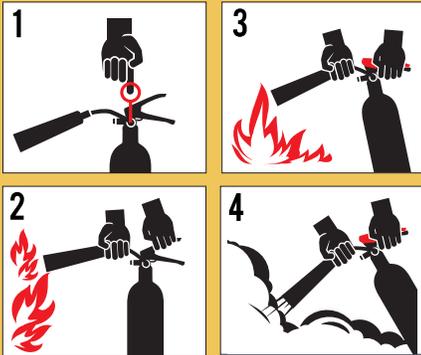
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Most portable extinguishers discharge completely in as little as 8 to 10 seconds.



1. **PULL** – Pull the pin. This will also break the tamper seal.
2. **AIM** – Aim low. Point the extinguisher nozzle or hose at the base of the fire. (Do not touch the plastic discharge horn on CO2 extinguishers, it gets very cold and may damage skin).
3. **SQUEEZE** – Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent.
4. **SWEEP** – Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be out. Watch the area. If the fire re-ignites, repeat steps 2 - 4.

Fire Classes

There are five classes of fire, each involving a different material:



Ordinary Combustibles

Fires in paper, cloth, wood, rubber, and many plastics.



Flammable Liquids

Fires in oils, gasoline, some paints, lacquers, grease, solvents, and other flammable liquids.



Electrical Equipment

Fires in wiring, fuse boxes, energized electrical equipment, computers, and other electrical sources.



Metals

Fires involving powders, flakes or shavings of combustible metals such as magnesium, titanium, potassium, and sodium.



Kitchen

Fires involving combustible cooking fluids such as oils and fats.

Safety Tips

- Determine what type of fire extinguisher you need ahead of time by looking for the symbol on the label and matching it to one of the descriptions in the table above. If you already have fire extinguishers, check the labels to see what class of fire they are for.
- A **red slash** through a picture means the extinguisher should not be used for that class of fire.
- Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area 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.
- 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.
- To operate most fire extinguishers, remember the word **PASS**
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit. Keep your back to a clear exit when you use an extinguisher so you can make a quick escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.
- Inspect fire extinguishers for damage once a month and keep them fully charged. (See manufacturer's instructions for details.) Rechargeable extinguishers need to be serviced after each use. Disposable units can only be used once.

