



Tips on Using Portable Fire Extinguishers

In a fire breaks out in your workplace, the proper use of a portable fire extinguisher could mean the difference between a minor property loss or a major one. But there are several items to consider in using fire extinguishers. For instance, you must know the class of fire involved and the correct type of fire extinguisher to use.

Classes of fires and fire extinguishing agents

Class A - Involves ordinary combustibles such as paper, wood, cloth, rubber or plastics. The common extinguishing agents are water or dry chemical.

Class B - Flammable liquids, grease or gases are covered under this category. Common extinguishing agents are foam, carbon dioxide or dry chemical.

Class C - Live electrical fires are included in this category. Carbon dioxide or dry chemical extinguishers should be used. However, the actual burning product could be from another class.

Class D - Burning materials include combustible metals such as magnesium and sodium. Special extinguishing agents, approved by recognized testing laboratories, are needed when working with these metals.

How to respond to a fire

Pull the fire alarm and call the local fire department immediately if a fire breaks out. Follow your company's procedures on responding to fires. But attempt to fight the fire only if, (1) you know

the type of material burning, (2) you have been trained to use the fire extinguisher correctly, and (3) if the fire is still in the early stage. Once the fire gets out of control, evacuate the premises immediately.

Remember the PASS technique when using an extinguisher

P - Pull. Pull the locking pin before using the fire extinguisher.

A - Aim. Aim the fire extinguisher at the base of the fire. Not at the flames or smoke.

S - Squeeze. Squeeze the lever of the fire extinguisher to operate and discharge.

S - Sweep. Sweep the fire extinguisher back and forth at the base of the fire to extinguish.

A typical fire extinguisher contains about 10 seconds of extinguishing power or less if it has been used previously. Always read the instructions that come with the extinguisher beforehand and become familiarized with its parts. It is highly recommended by fire prevention experts that you seek hands-on training before operating a fire extinguisher. Most local fire departments offer this service.

Prevention is the key when it comes to fire-fighting. Good housekeeping, proper storage procedures and safe work practices will go a long way toward reducing the likelihood of a fire destroying valuable property and/or injuring workers in the area.



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