

Fire Extinguishers – Inspection and Use

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Having the right fire extinguisher and knowing how to use it safely can make a huge difference between putting out a small fire and suffering a major loss. If the correct fire extinguisher is properly used, a small fire can be contained and extinguished quickly – before people are injured or property is damaged.

There are many types and sizes of fire extinguishers available. Check with your local Fire Marshall to determine if you have the correct type/size extinguishers and that they are in the correct location. Fire extinguishers should be mounted on brackets or in wall cabinets with the top of the extinguisher at a maximum of 5 feet from the ground. Extinguishers over 40 pounds should be mounted at lower heights with the carrying handle about 3 feet from the floor. Access to the extinguisher should be unrestricted and the extinguisher should be in plain view. Nothing should be hanging on or covering the extinguisher. It is important to know the locations and the types of extinguishers in your workplace prior to actually using one.



Fire Extinguisher Inspection

Fire extinguishers should be serviced annually by a licensed fire extinguisher maintenance company. In between annual service you should inspect the fire extinguishers monthly.

- Confirm the extinguisher is visible, unobstructed and in its designated location.
- Verify the locking pin is intact and the tamper seal is unbroken. Examine the extinguisher for obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzle.
- Confirm the pressure gauge or indicator is in the operable range or position, and lift the extinguisher to ensure it is still full.
- Make sure the operating instructions on the nameplate are legible and facing outward.
- Ensure that the service tag is up to date.

How to Properly Use a Fire Extinguisher

First make sure everyone is out of the building and that someone has contacted the local fire department. If you are in the position where you feel that you can safely extinguish a small fire and you have an escape route, remember the word **P.A.S.S.** from the National Fire Protection Agency:

Pull the pin from the extinguisher.

Aim the nozzle or hose towards the base of the fire.

Squeeze the handle to discharge the fire extinguishing agent.

Sweep the nozzle of the fire extinguisher from side to side until the fire is out. Watch the area in case of re-ignition.

There is no substitution for hands-on training when it comes to learning how to use a portable fire extinguisher. AMIC/MWCF's Loss Control Division offers live fire extinguisher training using the latest available technology – the Intelligent Training System (I.T.S.) from BullEx. This training is intended to promote correct fire extinguisher use by every employee and is, therefore, not exclusive to fire departments. **For more information visit www.losscontrol.org.**



Sources: OSHA.gov, National Fire Protection Association and Amerex-fire.com