Fire Extinguishers Meeting Kit

FIRE EXTINGUISHER USE AND INSPECTION

Fire extinguishers can be an important tool in preventing a small fire from growing larger. However, they should not be used to combat large or rapidly spreading fires. It is important to understand how to use a fire extinguisher and the limitations they have.

EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW THE BASICS OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Evacuate immediately if the fire has become too large to handle, it’s rapidly spreading, or the extinguisher is empty, and the flames are still burning.

When it comes to fire extinguisher use, remember that not all fire extinguishers are the same. Each one has a label indicating the type of fire it’s to be used for.

Under a standardized letter coding system, most fires fall into the A, B, or C category. If your fire extinguisher is rated for all three, the label will have all three letters. The D and K categories are for more specialized situations.

TYPES OF EXTINGUISHERS

The first thing to know about fire extinguishers is that there are several types that are used in different situations.

- Class A Extinguishers are used on regular combustibles like wood and paper.
- Class B Extinguishers are for flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, or grease.
- Class C Extinguishers are only used for energized electrical fires related to equipment

- Class D Extinguishers are used for flammable metals like lithium or magnesium.
- Class K Extinguishers are required where there are combustible cooking materials in kitchens.

Each type of fire extinguisher has its own requirements for placement as well as the required number to be used.

EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

P.A.S.S. Method – Outlines Four Steps

The easiest way to remember how to use a fire extinguisher is to follow the P.A.S.S. method. The PASS acronym was developed to allow people to remember the basic four steps to properly using a fire extinguisher.

P- Pull. Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher away and release the locking mechanism.

A- Aim. Aim the stream towards the base of the fire. Spraying the flames will not put the fire out.

S- Squeeze. Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly. Pulling the lever too fast may shoot the stream from your target wasting the valuable firefighting agent.

S- Sweep. Sweep the nozzle side to side to combat the fire.

HOW TO SELECT A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

- The size of the facility: To calculate the number of extinguishers that you would need divide the square footage of the building by the number of square feet that the fire extinguisher can handle.
- The layout of the room: The NFPA states that there should not be more than 75 feet between fire extinguishers.
- The fire hazard level of the building: Is there a light fire

hazard, ordinary fire hazard (class 1 or 2), an extra fire hazard (class 1 or 2), or does the building include a commercial kitchen?

- If there are any flammable liquids around: If flammable liquids or gases are stored in more than 5-gallon containers, then there must be at the minimum a 10B rated fire extinguisher within 50 feet of the substance.
- The presence of stairwells: There must at least one fire extinguisher across from stairwells in multiple-level facilities.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYEES

- Employers must provide an educational program to familiarize employees with the general principles of fire extinguisher use and the hazards involved with incipient stage fire fighting.
- Provide this education when employees are first hired and once a year thereafter.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER INSPECTION TIPS

- Extinguishers should be checked every 30 days.
- Ensure the pressure is okay when inspecting a fire extinguisher. There is a gauge that has an arrow that should be in the green portion of the gauge. If the arrow is in the red the fire extinguisher needs to be tagged out of service until recharged.

MORE EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

Employee responders to a fire should be trained in the following protocol:

- If appropriate, sound the fire alarm or call the fire department immediately.
- Before approaching the fire, determine an evacuation route

safe of flames, excessive heat and smoke. Do not allow this evacuation route to become blocked.
- Use the PASS technique for discharging an extinguisher and back away from the area if the fire flares up again.
- If the extinguisher is empty and the fire is not out, evacuate immediately.

SCOPE OF FIRE EXTINGUISHER USE

Fire extinguishers are meant to handle only small fires. If any of the following conditions are present, workers should follow evacuation procedures immediately and should not attempt to fight the fire with an extinguisher:

- **The fire is too large.** The fire involves flammable solvents, is partially hidden behind a wall or ceiling, cannot be reached from a standing position, or covers more than 60 square feet in area.
- **The air is unsafe to breathe.** Smoke levels make the fire impossible to fight without respiratory protection.
- **The environment is too hot or smoky.** Radiated heat is easily felt, making it hard to approach a fire within adequate range of using the extinguisher (about 10-15 feet).
- **Evacuation paths.** The fire is not contained and heat, smoke, or flames block potential evacuation routes.

FINAL WORD

It is important to know more than just where the fire extinguishers are located in your work area. Make sure you know how to properly use them in case the time comes where you need to extinguish a fire. Always make sure the fire extinguishers in your work areas are in good condition through thorough inspections.