



## Portland Fire & Rescue - Portable Fire Extinguishers Guide

### FIGHTING SMALL FIRES

**Used properly**, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or suppressing it until the fire department arrives.

Portable extinguishers do have limitations. They are NOT designed to fight large fires that are spreading quickly. Most portable extinguishers sold for home use have a short range (6 to 10 feet) and discharge completely in a very short time (8 to 10 seconds). They are appropriate for fighting such small fires as in a wastebasket– **IF** the fire is caught in its early stages.

Public buildings, such as offices, stores and schools, are usually required by local fire safety codes to be equipped with larger, more effective, portable extinguishers.



### THE PROPER EXTINGUISHER

Fire Extinguishers are tested by independent testing laboratories and should be labeled for the type of fire that they are intended to extinguish.

### CLASSES OF FIRES

There are five classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires– a red slash through any of the symbols tells you that the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you only that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire.

		Ordinary Combustibles	Wood, Paper, Cloth, Etc.
		Flammable Liquids	Grease, Oil, Paint, Solvents
		Live Electrical Equipment	Electrical Panel, Motor, Wiring, Etc.
		Combustible Metal	Magnesium, Aluminum, Etc.
		Commercial Cooking Equipment	Cooking Oils, Animal Fats, Vegetable Oils

**WARNING:** It is very dangerous to use a water extinguisher on anything other than a CLASS A fire!!!

## EXTINGUISHER SIZES

Portable extinguishers are also rated for the size of fire that they can handle. This rating is expressed as a combination of numbers and letters. This rating will appear on the label; for example, "classification 2A:10BC." The larger the numbers, the larger the fire of a specific class that the extinguisher can handle. There is no number with the extinguisher's C rating. The C on the label indicates only that the extinguisher is safe to use on electrical fires.

Extinguishers for Class D fires must match the type of metal that is burning. These extinguishers do not use general numeric ratings but are instead labeled with a list detailing the metals that match the unit's extinguishing agent.

## INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE

Extinguishers should be installed in plain view, above the reach of children, near an escape route, and away from stoves and heating appliances. Ask your local fire department for advice on the best locations. Extinguishers require routine care. Read your operator's manual and ask your dealer how your extinguisher should be inspected and serviced. Rechargeable models must be serviced after every use. Disposable fire extinguishers can only be used once and must be replaced after use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and check the pressure in your extinguishers once a month.

## SHOULD YOU FIGHT THE FIRE?

BEFORE you begin to fight a fire:

- Make sure everyone has left, or is leaving, the building.
- Make sure the 9-1-1 emergency number has been called.
- Make sure the fire is confined to a small area and isn't spreading.
- Be sure you have a good escape route.
- Know what is burning and be sure you are using the proper type of extinguisher to fight the fire.
- Consider the possible danger posed by hazardous or highly flammable materials near the fire area.
- Be sure you have read the instructions and that you know how to use the extinguisher.

It is reckless to fight a fire in any other circumstances. Instead, leave immediately and close off the area.

## REMEMBER THE "PASS" WORD!

KEEP YOUR back to an exit and stand six to eight feet away from the fire. Follow the four-step "PASS" procedure. If the fire does not begin to go out immediately, leave the area at once. **WARNING:** Portable fire extinguishers discharge within 8-30 seconds!

**PULL the pin:** This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other lever mechanisms.

**AIM low:** Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire. Hold extinguisher upright.

**SQUEEZE the lever above the handle:** This discharges the agent in the extinguisher. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever.)

**SWEEP from side to side:** Moving carefully toward the fire, keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames appear to be out. Watch the fire area. If the fire re-ignites, repeat the process. Always be sure the fire department inspects the fire site, even though you think that you've extinguished the fire.

For additional information, please call Portland Fire & Rescue (503) 823-3700.