



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

# Weekly Safety Meeting

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## Fire Extinguisher Safety

Do you know how to extinguish a fire? According to OSHA regulations, no one at a workplace is supposed to use a fire extinguisher unless they have been trained to do so. Though this may seem awfully restrictive, there are several good reasons for this rule. If an untrained person tries to extinguish a blaze, some serious mistakes can happen. Any of these mistakes can cause the fire to become worse, or injure or kill the individual.

Fire extinguishers are meant to be used on **small fires** that are in their incipient or **beginning** stages and to protect evacuation routes.

In the event of a fire, the correct use of a portable fire extinguisher could mean the difference between suffering a minor loss or a major one. Portable fire extinguishers, if used properly, can make that difference. But there are several things 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 extinguishers:

1. Class "A" - Involves ordinary combustibles such as paper, wood, cloth, rubber, or plastics. The common extinguishing media is water or dry chemical.
2. Class "B" - Flammable liquids, grease, and gases are covered under this category. Common extinguishing media are foam, carbon dioxide, or dry chemical.
3. Class "C" - Live electrical fires. CO2 or dry chemical extinguishers should be used. However, the actual burning products may be class "A" items.
4. 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.
5. Class "K" - Class K fires are fires with substances such as the animal and vegetable fats present in commercial cooking oils and greases. A Class K fire extinguisher uses a fine wet mist consisting of an alkaline mixture, such as potassium acetate, potassium carbonate, or potassium citrate that forms a soapy foam as it is applied to the cooking oil or other substance, quenching the steam, vapors, and the fire's risk of re-ignition.

### **Use your judgment:**

When you see smoke or fire you should use your own good judgment before you decide to extinguish the blaze. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the fire limited in size and spread?
- Will you have an escape route if something goes wrong?
- Do you know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher?

If you are confident the fire is controllable, and your safety is ensured, attempt to put it out. If the answer to any of these questions is no, evacuate the area immediately.

### **Responding to fires:**

Sound the fire alarm and call the local fire department immediately if a fire breaks out.

Once you have decided to extinguish the blaze, attempt to fight the fire only if,

- You know the type of combustible material burning;
- You have been trained to use the fire extinguisher correctly; and
- The fire is still in the incipient (beginning) stage.

**If the fire gets too large or out of control, evacuate immediately!**

### **Remember P-A-S-S**

- 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.

Most extinguishers will only allow about 10-seconds of extinguishing media. Prevention is the key when it comes to firefighting. Good housekeeping, proper storage procedures, and safe work practices will go a long way toward reducing the likelihood that a fire will destroy valuable property.

**FIRE PREVENTION IS EVERYBODY'S JOB!**

