



State Fire Marshal's Office

The Q&A Series: The “Low Down” on Fire Extinguishers

Question: Are all extinguishers the same?

Answer: No. There are several types and sizes, all based on the type of fire they are designed to extinguish:

- 1. Class A fires involve ordinary combustibles like paper, wood, cloth, and most plastics. Class A extinguishers are designated by the letter A inside of a green triangle.**
- 2. Class B fires involve flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, and solvents. Class B extinguishers are designated by the letter B inside of a red box.**
- 3. Class C fires involve electrical equipment including outlets and wiring. Class C extinguishers are designated by the letter C inside of a blue circle.**
- 4. Class D fires involve combustible metals like magnesium, titanium, aluminum, sodium, and potassium. Class D extinguishers are designated by the letter D inside of a yellow star.**
- 5. Class K fires involve combustible cooking elements such as animal or vegetable oils and fats.**

Question: Why can't I use any extinguisher on any fire?

Answer: Different types of fires require different forms of extinguishing agents.

Some extinguishers contain extinguishing agents that will work on a variety of fires. Look for the classes clearly marked on the label. Extinguishers that can be used on multiple types of fires are typically labeled “multi-purpose-ABC.”

Question: Where should the extinguishers be located?

Answer: By law, extinguishers must be conspicuously located and readily accessible for immediate use in the event of a fire. Extinguishers must be distributed in such a way that the

amount of time needed to travel to their location and back to the fire does not allow the fire to get out of control.

Question: How do I use an extinguisher?

Answer: Always follow the P.A.S.S acronym:

1. **PULL** the pin.
2. **AIM** at the base of the fire.
3. **SQUEEZE** the lever.
4. **SWEEP** the nozzle from side to side.

Question: Once activated, how long will an extinguisher operate?

Answer: You will only have about 15 to 20 seconds of use once you begin to disperse the extinguishing agent.

Question: When is a fire too big to use an extinguisher?

Answer: When a fire is bigger than “you,” then do not attempt to put it out. Get out of the area and call 911 immediately.

Question: How often does an extinguisher need to be inspected?

Answer: At least once a year, and by a technician licensed by the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

**For more information, contact the State Fire Marshal’s Office
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