

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

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If a fire breaks out in your home, do you know where your fire extinguisher is? How do you know it is the right extinguisher for your home? How does it work? Will it function properly when you need it? These and many other questions are common concerns.

How many extinguishers should I have and where should I put them? Every home should have at least one fire extinguisher. It should be readily accessible near the high-risk areas in your home (kitchen, garage, etc.). Don't place it next to the stove or fireplace. The heat and smoke will not allow you to reach it. Don't hide it in the closet behind the Christmas decorations or lay it on a cabinet shelf with the good china. Hang your extinguisher on the wall. You can hang it behind the door if you don't like to look at it, but if you can't see it, will you take care of it?

How do I know what type to buy? You can purchase a disposable multi-purpose fire extinguisher at most hardware stores, building centers, or department store. Also available is a rechargeable extinguisher, which will cost a little more. These can be purchased from a fire extinguisher company listed in the yellow pages. A Multi-purpose extinguisher is designed to fight class "A", "B", and "C" type fires.

What is meant by a class of fire? A class "A" fire is ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth, or plastics. A class "B" fire is a flammable liquid fire such as gasoline, oil, or cooking grease. A class "C" fire is an energized electrical fire such as a toaster, outlet, or fuse box. Remember that it is not an electrical fire if the power is off to that appliance.

How do I operate an extinguisher? First, make sure you are comfortable using the extinguisher and the fire is not too large. If you have to ask... should I... or shouldn't I. You probably shouldn't! Second, hold the extinguisher upright and stand 6 (six) to 8 (eight) feet from the fire. Third, remember the acronym P.A.S.S. Pull the pin. Aim the tip or nozzle at the base of the fire. Squeeze the trigger. Sweep the extinguisher across the fire. Keep your back to an open exit. Never let the fire get between you and the door. Never turn your back on a fire even if you think it is out.

How do I know if it will work when I need it? The label must be legible. Look at the gauge. The indicator on the gauge must be in the green area. If it is in the red (either overcharged or recharge) the extinguisher may not work.

Is there anything I can do to maintain my extinguisher? Every month, turn the extinguisher upside down and tap it with a rubber mallet or the palm of your hand to loosen up the powder. Again check the gauge. Rechargeable extinguishers require servicing every 6 years by a technician.