



SAFETY BRIEF: A GUIDE TO PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

You know fire extinguishers are important and understand their basic function. But are you aware there are different types for various purposes and how to correctly use them? Portable fire extinguishers can be extremely effective in combating small fires within the workplace. However, not all extinguishers are the same. There are different classes for different types of fires. Proper selection and placement of extinguishers is extremely important. Do you know where the fire extinguishers are in our office? They are in the main corridors just inside each entry/exit point and in our kitchen. They are all class ABC:

Types of Portable Fire Extinguishers

- **Class A** (most common)
 - Identified by a green triangle containing the letter A.
 - Used for wood, paper, cloth, cardboard, and most ordinary combustibles.
 - Contains water.
- **Class B**
 - Identified by a red square containing the letter B.
 - Used for flammable liquids, such as oil, solvents, greases, and gases.
 - Contains dry chemicals, carbon dioxide, or halogenated agents to smother the fire with foam.
- **Class C**
 - Identified by a blue circle containing the letter C.
 - Used for energized electrical equipment, such as electrical boxes, panels, transformers, etc.
 - Contains dry chemicals, carbon dioxide, or halogenated agents to smother the fire with powder.
- **Class D**
 - Identified by a yellow five-pointed star containing the letter D.
 - Used for combustible metals.
 - Contains dry powder agent (specific to the combustible metal involved).
- **Class K**
 - Identified by the letter K.
 - Used for fats, grease, and oils in commercial kitchens.
 - Contains wet chemicals (potassium acetate).

Hygieneering has a program that addresses the maintenance and inspection of fire extinguishers which is required monthly. An outside service checks on the following:

- Extinguishers are in their assigned location, clearly visible, and not blocked or hidden by objects that would interfere with access.
- Nameplates with operating instructions are legible and facing outward.
- Pressure gauges indicate that the equipment is fully charged (in the green zone).
- Pins and tamper seals are intact.
- Equipment is in good condition – no physical damage, corrosion, or leaks.

Note: If the powder in dry powder extinguishers becomes packed, it can be loosened by gently rocking the extinguishers from top to bottom.



Use of Extinguisher

- As a general rule, the 4-step PASS process can be used for operation:
 - **Pull** the pin.
 - **Aim** the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - **Squeeze** the handle slowly and evenly to discharge the material.
 - **Sweep** the nozzle from side-to-side.

Don't attempt to fight unless:

- Alarm is sounded and you have called 911
- Fire is small and contained
- You have safe egress route (can be reached without exposure to fire)
- Available extinguishers are rated for size and type of fire

If in doubt, evacuate!

Personal safety is paramount. If there is ever an instance where life is threatened, immediately leave the facility.



FIRE EXTINGUISHER SAFETY QUIZ

- 1) In our office, all extinguishers are type A to fight paper type fires only.
 True
 False

- 2) You should always keep an exit or means of escape at your back when trying to fight a fire.
 True
 False

3. An extinguisher with a C rating is designed for use on which type of fire?
 - A. A fire involving flammable liquids
 - B. A fire involving combustible metals
 - C. A fire involving energized electrical equipment
 - D. A fire involving ordinary combustible materials

4. How often are fire extinguishers required to be visually inspected?
 - A. Monthly
 - B. Annually
 - C. Both - monthly and annually
 - D. As needed

5. The correct way to use a fire extinguisher is:
 - A. Pull the pin, aim at the top of fire, shoot from top to bottom, sweep around the base of the fire.
 - B. Pull the pin, aim at top of fire, squeeze the top handle, sweep from side to side.
 - C. Pull the pin, aim at base of fire, squeeze the top handle, sweep from side to side.
 - D. Pull the pin, shoot at bottom of fire, aim and sweep from side to side.

SCORE: PASS / FAIL

Employee Signature

Supervisor Signature

Date