



5 Minute Safety Meetings

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Fire Extinguisher Types and Uses

Applicable Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.157

1. OSHA Requires Most Employers to Have and Maintain Fire Extinguishers

- Approved, fully charged, operable extinguishers must be placed and identified, so employees can reach them easily.
- Extinguishers must be visually inspected monthly and tested at least yearly to be sure they're working properly.
- Take time to locate the fire extinguishers nearest your work area. If in doubt, ask your supervisor.

2. Use Fire Extinguishers Only on Small, Contained Fires

- If in doubt, sound alarm, evacuate properly, and let trained firefighters handle it.

3. Use Class A Extinguishers on Fires of Ordinary Combustibles

- They wet down and cool fires involving paper, cloth, trash, wood, etc.
- Class A extinguisher numbers (1-A, 2-A, etc.) indicate the size fire each can handle.
- The higher the number, the larger the fire area it can handle.
- OSHA requires Class A's to be no more than 75 feet from the area of likely use.

4. Use Class B Extinguishers on Fires Involving Gases or Flammable Liquids

- They cut off oxygen to, or reduce flame in, fires involving combustibles such as grease, oil, paint, solvents.
- Class B extinguisher numbers (5-B, 10-B) tell how many square feet each can handle.
- OSHA requires Class B's to be no more than 50 feet from the area of likely use.

5. Use Class C Extinguishers on Fires on or Near Electrical Equipment

- They use carbon dioxide or a dry chemical to put out these fires.
- **Never use water on an electrical fire.** Water conducts electricity and could cause a dangerous shock to the person holding the extinguisher.
- Class C's don't have numbers

6. Use ABC or BC Extinguishers on Combination Fires

- The letters identify the type of fire they can handle.

7. Use Class D Extinguishers on Combustible Metal Fires

- They're used on sodium, magnesium, zinc, potassium, powdered aluminum, titanium, and other combustible metal fires.
- They must be within 75 feet of operations that generate combustible metal powders, flakes, or shavings.
- Class D's are considered "special hazard" protection and have no numbers.

8. Use Extinguishers Properly

If you feel a fire is small enough to handle with an extinguisher:

- Pull the pin.
- Stand about 8 feet from the fire.
- Aim carefully at the base of the fire; you probably won't have a second chance.
- Be especially careful not to spread combustible fires (e.g., by blowing burning papers out of a wastebasket).
- Squeeze the trigger.

Conclusion: Know How to Choose and When to Use a Fire Extinguisher

The right extinguisher, properly used, can handle small fires. In all other cases, turn on an alarm and leave the job to trained firefighters.