



**FIRE  
DEPARTMENT**

## **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

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*Should you fight the fire?*

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN** to fight a fire:

- Make sure everyone has left or is leaving the building.
- Make sure the fire department has been called.
- Make sure the fire is confined to a small area and is not spreading.
- Be sure you have an unobstructed escape route to which the fire will not spread.
- Be sure you have read the instructions and that you know how to use the fire extinguisher.



***It is reckless to fight a fire in any other circumstances.  
Instead, leave immediately and close off the area.***

### **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS HAVE LIMITS**

**USED PROPERLY**, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or by containing it until the fire department arrives. Portable extinguishers for home use are not designed to fight large or spreading fires. Even against small fires, they are only useful under certain conditions.

- The operator must know how to use the extinguisher. There is no time to read directions during an emergency.
- The extinguisher must be within easy reach, in working order and fully charged.
- The operator must have a clear escape route that will not be blocked by the fire.
- The extinguisher must match the type of fire being fought. Extinguishers that contain water are unsuitable for use on grease or electrical fires.
- The extinguisher must be large enough to put out the fire. Many portable extinguishers discharge completely in as few as 8 to 10 seconds.

### **CHOOSING YOUR EXTINGUISHER**

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS ARE** tested by independent testing laboratories and should be labeled for the type of fire they are intended to extinguish.

## CLASSES OF FIRES

**THERE ARE THREE** basic classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A red slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you only that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire.

- Class A: *Ordinary combustibles* such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber and many plastics.
- Class B: *Flammable liquids* such as gasoline, oil, grease, tar, oil-based paint, lacquer and flammable gases.
- Class C: *Energized electrical equipment*, including wiring fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery and appliances.



ORDINARY  
COMBUSTIBLES



FLAMMABLE  
LIQUIDS



ELECTRICAL  
EQUIPMENT

Many household fire extinguishers are "multi-purpose" A-B-C models, labeled for use on all three classes of fire. If you are ever faced with a Class A fire and do not have an extinguisher with an "A" symbol, do not hesitate to use one with the "B:C" symbol.

**WARNING:** *It is very dangerous to use water from an extinguisher labeled only for Class A fire on a Class B or Class C fire.*

### Remember the **PASS**-word

- P** – Pull the pin. This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other lever release mechanisms.
- A** – Aim low. Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire.
- S** – Squeeze the lever above the handle. This discharges the extinguishing agent. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever.)
- S** – Sweep from side to side. Moving carefully toward the fire, keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames appear to be out. Watch the fire area. If the fire re-ignites, repeat the process.

***Always be sure the fire department inspects the fire site, even if you think you have extinguished the fire.***