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MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY,
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Safe Use of
Fire Extinguishers

Some time in our life there might be a time when we encounter an out of control fire. So, knowing how to use a fire extinguisher is an important skill that might just help you save a life, a building or may even both. Following we shall discuss facts concerning fire extinguishers and how to use them:

Important Fire Fighting Tips-

- ✓ Portable fire extinguishers can save lives and buildings and can contain a fire until the fire truck arrives.
- ✓ Extinguishers have their limitations – they are good for small fires and containing others.
- ✓ Fires spread quickly and can do extensive damage in a matter of minutes to the lives of people and property.
- ✓ Above are the reasons why it is important to follow the steps below in deciding whether to fight the fire or get help:
- ✓ Act quickly! Get other people to safety before trying to put out the fire.
- ✓ Notify the fire department or get someone else to do it.
- ✓ Judge the size of the fire –only fight it if it is small and concentrated in a small area.
- ✓ Look for an escape route. Don't attempt to fight a fire unless you have a clear route out.
- ✓ Be sure that the extinguisher is the right type for the fire that you will be fighting.
- ✓ Only fight a fire that you feel comfortable in doing so. When in doubt-get help! Don't try to be a hero!

Choose the Right Fire Extinguisher-

Using the wrong type of fire extinguisher on a fire can make the situation worst. Following are the main types of fires:

Class A – Combustibles - cloth, wood, paper, rubber and various plastics.

Class B – Grease, gasoline or oil-based fires.

Class C – Electrical fires caused by appliances, tools, and other plugged in gear. Units can be serviced with CO² or halon. Halon1211 and 1301 are expensive and depletes the ozone layer, but are being replaced by non-depleting agents such as FM200. Halon is now illegal in numerous jurisdictions.

Class D – Used in water-reactive metals such as magnesium and will be located in factories using such metals. It comes in the form of powder that must cover the material to extinguish it.

Class K – This contains a special purpose wet chemical agent for use in kitchen fires to stop fires started by vegetable oils, animal fats, or other fats started in cooking appliances.

**Many fire extinguishers will work on a combination of fire classes. You must decide rapidly the type of fire and if you have the right extinguisher to fight that type of fire. An all-purpose Type ABC extinguisher (10 lb.) is a safe bet for most fires, especially if you aren't sure of the fire's origin.

Using a Fire Extinguisher-

- It's a wise idea to have everyone get familiar with the location of the extinguishers and the type, so that in case of an emergency they will know where to go to get the unit that is required for the fire.
- Be sure that the extinguisher is in good condition before you attempt to use it.

Portable Fire Extinguisher Use-

1. Know the location of the units so that you can get to them in case of an emergency.
2. Be familiar with the type so that you can select the right type if a fire should break out.
3. Following is an acronym that will tell you step-by-step exactly how to use the extinguisher:

P-A-S-S

P – Pull the pin. The pin and plastic seal are located at the top of the unit. Pull on the pin while twisting & the seal should break, allowing the pin to come out.

A – Aim low. Point the extinguisher's hose nozzle to the base of the fire.

S – Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.

S – Sweep the nozzle from side to side along base of fire.

Other Safety Hints-

- ✓ For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher type that can be used on several types of fires. (Example-Type ABC)
- ✓ When purchasing an extinguisher, choose one that has been approved by an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriters' Laboratories.
- ✓ Read the instructions that comes with the new unit to become totally familiar with its proper use.
- ✓ Install the unit or units, if you have more than one, close to doors. They must be wall mounted and have sticker above the mount signifying its location.
- ✓ Keep your back to a clear exit-in case the fire gets out of control you will have a clear exit out. Don't hesitate to leave if you feel that the fire is out of your control. As we say, "When in doubt-Get out!" We emphasize – don't try to be a hero!
- ✓ If you spot an extinguisher with the pin missing, the seal is missing or the regulator shows it to be discharged or the inspection tag shows that it hasn't been inspected –report this to your supervisor.
- ✓ If it is possible turn off the power source.
- ✓ Stay low if you have to exit a burning building-when crawling or walking low as possible you will breathe less smoke.
- ✓ Do not attempt to fight a large fire unless you have been properly trained.
- ✓ A typical fire extinguisher will contain about 10 seconds of extinguishing power. So at that point if you don't have control of the fire-get out and call for help.

General Warnings-

- ✓ It's a criminal offense to misuse a fire extinguisher.
- ✓ Be aware that non-water based fire extinguishers are designed to smother fires. Keep away from respiratory organs.
- ✓ Don't use a fire extinguisher if there isn't a fire.
- ✓ Be aware that the powder from dry chemical extinguishers will damage some electronics. Try to avoid these dry powder types where electronics are present, instead use a CO² or other clean agent type.
- ✓ Fire blanket – if you use a fire blanket-always remember to stop, drop, and roll to put out fires on your body (for added flame smothering assistance).

**FIRE ACCIDENTS BRING TEARS:
FIRE SAFETY BRINGS CHEERS!!**

KILL THE FIRE BEFORE IT KILLS YOU!

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Excerpts: <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information>
<http://www.wikihow.com/Use--fire-Extinguisher> 3/1/2017