



Provided by Mike Felix
Association Coordinator

Fire Control

Knowing how to use an extinguisher saves lives, property

The use of a fire extinguisher in the hands of a properly trained person can be a life and property saving tool. However, most workers don't know the proper way to use these devices.

With cooler weather approaching and the likelihood of people using space heaters, fire places and increasing their comfort-food cooking, SCF Arizona believes it's a good time to review basic fire extinguisher safety.

The U.S. Fire Administration recommends that people get proper training before using a fire extinguisher. Any local fire department is willing to provide the proper training.

Before buying a fire extinguisher for your workplace or for your home, the USFA says you should consider these questions:

1. What type of fire extinguisher is needed? Different types of fires require different types of extinguishers. For example, a grease fire and an electrical fire require the use of different extinguishing agents to be effective and safely put the fire out.
Five different extinguishing agents are available, so extinguishers come with five codes:
 - Class A – For fires involving ordinary combustible materials such as cloth, wood, rubber, paper and many plastics
 - Class B – For fires involving flammable liquids such as grease, gasoline, oil and oil-based paints
 - Class C – For fires involving appliances, tools or other equipment that is electronically energized or plugged in
 - Class D – For fires involving flammable metals
 - Class K – for fires involving vegetable or animal oils or fats in cooking appliances

Some extinguishers can be used on two or more kinds of fires, and they are labeled to indicate the usages, such as "B-C" or "A-B-C."

2. Is the fire at a point where a fire extinguisher can control it? Portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. They contain a limited amount of extinguishing agent and need to be used efficiently so the agent is not wasted. Use a fire extinguisher only if:
 - You have alerted other occupants and someone has called the fire department
 - The fire is small and contained to a single object, such as a wastebasket
 - You are safe from toxic smoke the fire may be producing
 - You have identified a means of escape and fire is not between you and the escape route

If you would like more information on workplace safety please contact your Association Coordinator Mike Felix

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If these conditions are not present, don't use a fire extinguisher. Instead, alert other occupants leave the building following a designated escape plan and call the fire department from a safe phone away from the fire.

3. Are you physically capable of using the extinguisher? Some people have physical limitations that might diminish their ability to properly use a fire extinguisher. People with disabilities, older adults or children may find that an extinguisher is too heavy to handle, or it may be too difficult for them to exert the necessary pressure to operate it.

Regardless of the kinds of fire extinguishers you have, the USFA says to keep them maintained to ensure that:

- It is in a conspicuous place unblocked by furniture, doorways, or anything that might limit access in an emergency.
- The pressure is at the recommended level.
- All parts are operating properly, and hoses or nozzles are free of insects or debris.
- The outside casing is clean and has no oil or grease on it.

Additionally the USFA recommends that you shake dry chemical extinguishers at least once a month to prevent the powder from settling or packing; pressure test the extinguisher after a number of years to ensure the cylinder is safe to use; immediately replace an extinguisher if it needs to be recharged or if it is damaged.

For a brochure on how to use a fire extinguisher, you can go to www.scfaz.com

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