

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are those things you should always have and never use. And, that's a problem right there. We never use them and therefore we never get used to them. Then when there is a need and it is an emergency we panic and either cannot get it off the wall or do not know how to turn it on and if we do get it to work, then we don't aim it at the right area of the fire. What is actually needed is practice but we don't get the chance normally. The most common type of fire extinguishers are;

Water extinguishers or APW extinguishers (air-pressurized water) are suitable for **class A fires only**. *Never use a water extinguisher on grease fires, electrical fires or class D fires* - the flames will spread and make the fire bigger! Water extinguishers are filled with water and are typically pressurized with air. Again - water extinguishers can be very dangerous in the wrong type of situation. Only fight the fire if you're certain it contains ordinary combustible materials only. Like wood, paper or cloth. **Dry chemical** extinguishers come in a variety of types and are suitable for a combination of **class A, B and C fires**. These are filled with foam or powder and pressurized with nitrogen. **BC** - This is the regular type of dry chemical extinguisher. It is filled with sodium bicarbonate or potassium bicarbonate. The BC variety leaves a mildly corrosive residue which must be cleaned immediately to prevent any damage to materials. **ABC** - This is the multipurpose dry chemical extinguisher. The ABC type is filled with monoammonium phosphate, a yellow powder that leaves a sticky residue that may be damaging to electrical appliances such as a computer but is probably the most common and the type found in most homes (that have them). Co2 extinguishers are mostly for electrical fires and are not common in homes.

You should **ONLY** attempt to put out a fire in the early stages when it is small and contained and **ONLY** when there is a means of escape behind you that is clear of fire. If the fire has spread beyond the early stages, it is time to evacuate your house. Be sure that the fire extinguisher is

large enough to put out the fire because many portable types will discharge completely within a matter of seconds. It is important to know the capabilities of the units that you have in your home before a fire starts. The best thing is to call 911 first. If you have an extinguisher that is more than 5 years old you may want to replace it. Make sure it has a gauge that indicates if it is fully charged. If you have one that shows the charge is less than full, get rid of it. Take the old one out in your yard or a field and discharge it to see how it operates and to get the feel of it. Pick a spot and aim it at that spot to see how you do. In a real fire the extinguisher should be aimed at the front or base of the fire and then work it towards the back. Make sure you know where your extinguisher is located, is easy to grab and that it is not hidden or covered. If you notice corrosion or any type of leakage get rid of it and buy a new one. Read the instructions that comes with the extinguisher so you are familiar with how to work it. Read it again occasionally so you stay familiarized with its operation.

To operate an extinguisher:

