

## Fire Extinguishers

Do you have a fire extinguisher or extinguishers? Do you know where it is today? If you do remember, is it easy to get to? Once you get it, do you remember how to use it or would you have to go get your reading glasses to read the instructions while your house burned down? Every now and then I bring out one of my fire extinguishers and show Gail how to use it. She doesn't remember from last time and forgets where they are kept anyway. That's okay, I told her if I am home just scream fire and get out of the house. I'll call 911. If I am not home just concentrate on getting out. This is good advice even if you have an extinguisher, know where it is and how to use it. Get everyone out, CALL 911 from your cell or neighbors phone and then use your extinguisher. There are many types of extinguishers and I will describe a few later but probably the only types you should have are the Dry Chemical type, the Co2 type and maybe the Halon type. There are water extinguishers but they cause water damage, can only be used for a paper or wood type of fire, are heavy and if used inside they could cause an electrical shock and possibly *start* a fire if the water gets into an electrical circuit. If you shut your main breaker off before using water that would be safe for the moment but you may have trouble later. But who could think that quickly. Fires grow extremely fast so I would say (and the experts recommend) that your first priority should be to make sure everyone is safely out of the house. You should plan on different ways out of the house in case the fire is blocking your normal exits. So if you have an extinguisher, be sure you know where it is and how to operate it. It also pays to know *how* to use it. Most extinguishers only last for less than a minute before the gas that operates it is expended. There is an Acronym Called PASS. You should practice it, **P**ULL the pin, **A**IM the nozzle, **S**QUEEZE the handle, **S**WEEP the base of the flames. What that doesn't indicate and is very important is that you should not be cheap and try to save the remainder of the extinguisher after you think the fire is out. Keep it at the base of the fire and use it all up to make sure the fire

is out and the heat is gone out of it so it will not re-ignite. The most common type of home extinguisher is the dry chemical type because you can use it on all types of home fires. A two pound extinguisher will cost in the neighborhood of \$25 and has a duration of about 10 seconds. A five pound extinguisher will cost about \$50 dollars and last about 13 seconds but has over twice the chemical powder. If you want to go real crazy, buy a 2 pounder with your grandchildren's inheritance (Don't tell them, whatever you do!) and go in the back yard, pull the pin and operate it. The powder is a little messy but will quickly dissipate. Never try to put a cooking oil or burning fat fire out with water. Turn off the source of heat and use a pot cover, an extinguisher or a wet towel to try and smother it.



**Dry Chemical** extinguishers are usually rated for multiple purpose use.

They contain an extinguishing agent and use a compressed, non-flammable gas as a propellant.

**Carbon Dioxide** (CO<sub>2</sub>) extinguishers are most effective on Class B and C (liquids and electrical) fires. Since the gas disperses quickly, these extinguishers are only effective from 3 to 8 feet. The carbon dioxide is stored as a compressed liquid in the extinguisher; as it expands, it cools the surrounding air. The cooling will often cause ice to form around the "horn" where the gas is expelled from the extinguisher. Since the fire could re-ignite, continue to apply the agent even after the fire appears to be out.

**Halon** extinguishers contain a gas that interrupts the chemical reaction that takes place when fuels burn. These types of extinguishers are often used to protect valuable electrical equipment since they leave no residue to clean up. Halon extinguishers have a limited range, usually 4 to 6 feet. The initial application of Halon should be made at the base of the fire, even after the flames have been extinguished. A 1 ¼ pound Halon extinguisher is in the \$170 range.

So what if anything, have we learned? One, don't do anything to start a fire. Two, if there is a fire, get everyone out of the house. Three, Call 911. And four would be to use a dry Chemical

Fire Extinguisher if you feel it would be safe for you.

As always, check this and other tips at - <http://www.aaazzz.net/id5.html> or go on the Fairways web-site and click on “Resources” and then on “Maintenance”.

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