

# FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

## Choosing Them and Using Them



### A FIRE SAFETY TOOL

A fire extinguisher can control a small fire before it can grow. Fire extinguishers can limit property damage and prevent injuries.

However, if you use the wrong extinguisher, or use it in the wrong way, you could create more problems than you solve.

Key things to know about fire extinguishers are:

1. What kinds of fires can they put out?
2. How should you store and maintain them?
3. When is it safe to use them?
4. How do you use them correctly?
5. When is it time to give up and escape?

Learn about your fire extinguishers before you need them. Make them life-saving tools.

### CUT YOUR LOSSES AND GET OUT

Know when it is time to stop fighting a fire and to escape. If any of the following happens, exit the area quickly:

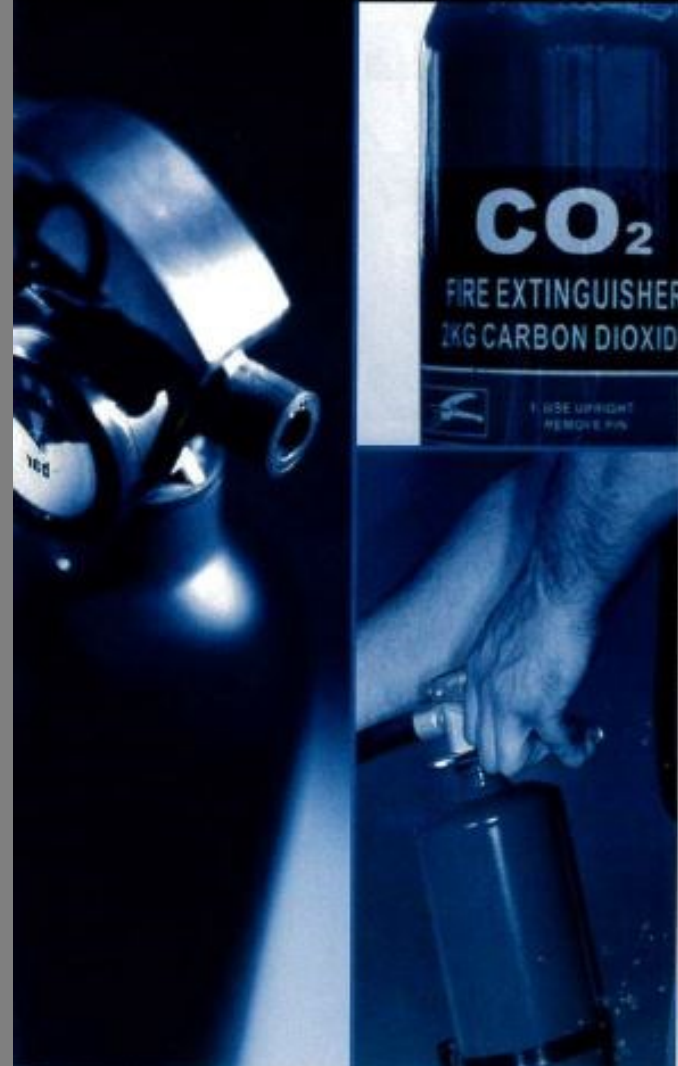
- If a fire spreads from its original area: **Get Out.**
- If smoke fills the room: **Get Out.**
- If a fire continues to burn after the extinguisher stops working: **Get Out.**
- If you feel overwhelmed or confused: **Get Out.**

Firefighters are best trained to deal with fire.



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# PLAN OF ATTACK

Using a portable fire extinguisher takes knowledge and training. Before you consider using an extinguisher, there's much you need to know. Purchase the right unit and learn how to use it, but be ready to let the experts take over, because fire is a powerful and deadly enemy.

## THE RIGHT EXTINGUISHER FOR THE JOB

Flammable materials are grouped into classes based on how they burn. Each class has its own type of fire extinguisher.

Letters and/or symbols on extinguishers show the classes of fire they can handle. Using the wrong class of extinguisher can spread the fire or cause injuries.



Most households are best protected by a multi-purpose fire extinguisher (ABC or BC).

## CLASSES OF FIRE

- A** Ordinary materials (wood, paper, etc.) The number on the unit's label shows size of fire it can handle.
- B** Flammable liquids (grease, gasoline, etc.) Number on label tells how many square feet of fire the extinguisher can put out.
- C** Live (plugged in) electrical equipment The extinguishing agent will not conduct electricity.
- D** Combustible metals These are found in industry and in laboratories.
- K** High-temperature cooking equipment using grease and oil These are found in restaurants. Most can be used safely on Class A, B, and C fires.

## SAFE PLACEMENT

Install extinguishers in the kitchen, garage, workshop, or wherever you have flammables. Install them near exits, away from heat sources. Keep extinguishers easy for adults to see and reach, but out of the reach of children.

Most home extinguishers can be used only once. Read the manufacturer's instructions to learn about maintenance.

## KNOW HOW

First, call the fire department. Only use an extinguisher if you are comfortable operating it. Make sure you can control the unit easily; if not, make a safe escape.

To use a fire extinguisher correctly, follow these steps. Remember the word **PASS** to help you:

- Pull the pin.** The pin is at the top of the unit near the operating lever or button.
- Aim low.** Point the extinguisher's nozzle, horn, or hose at the base of the fire.
- Squeeze** the lever (or press the button) above the handle to release the agent that puts out the fire.
- Sweep** from side to side. Aim at the base of the fire. Move carefully toward the fire if it seems to be going out.



## FIGHT OR FLIGHT? HOW TO DECIDE

A fire extinguisher is not perfect protection. More important are working smoke alarms on every level of your home and a safe escape plan that the whole family knows. A fire extinguisher may be safe to use if:



- The fire department has been called. Get the experts on the way.
- The fire is small and contained. If the fire is spreading, leave the area.
- You know what is burning, and you have the right class of fire extinguisher. If you have the wrong class of extinguisher, you could spread the fire or cause an explosion.
- You know how to use the extinguisher.
- Everyone has left the area or is leaving. Only the person using the extinguisher should stay.
- You have an easy-to-reach exit at your back. If smoke fills the room, or the fire spreads, get out. Close doors behind you, but don't lock them.

