

# FIRE EXTINGUISHER SAFETY TIPS

Code officials are charged with ensuring that occupancies are properly outfitted with fire extinguishers and that they are placed in the right locations. This resource identifies which occupancies require extinguishers and where they should be placed within them. It also outlines related fire extinguisher requirements.

## Occupancy Requirements

Fire extinguishers **are required** in the following occupancy types:

- |                        |                                   |                            |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ambulatory health care | Hotel and dormitory               | Health care                |
| Apartments             | Industrial                        | Educational                |
| Assemblies             | Lodging and rooming               | Storage                    |
| Businesses             | Mercantile                        | Detention and correctional |
| Day Care               | Occupancies in special structures | Residential board and care |

Fire extinguishers **are not required** in one and two-family dwellings.

## Where and How Should Fire Extinguishers Be Located?

Fire extinguishers that are placed correctly can be accessed more quickly to help control a fire until the fire department arrives. Fire extinguishers are not intended to be a substitute for evacuating the building safely and quickly. Two key factors for locating extinguishers are that they should be accessible and visible.

### Accessible

Extinguishers should be placed where they are readily accessible in the event of a fire, which typically includes normal paths of travel.

**If extinguisher weighs more than 40 lb (18.14 kg)**

**Top of extinguisher** cannot be more than **3.5 feet (1.07m)** from the ground

**Bottom of extinguisher** must be at least **4 in (102mm)** off the ground

### Visible

Extinguishers should be placed where they are readily accessible in the event of a fire, which typically includes normal paths of travel.

**If extinguisher weighs less than 40 lb (18.14 kg)**

**Top of extinguisher** cannot be more than **5 feet (1.53m)** from the ground

**Bottom of extinguisher** must be at least **4 in (102mm)** off the ground



In both cases, this includes extinguishers in cabinets, but it does not include wheeled extinguishers.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHER SAFETY TIPS CONTINUED

Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.

To operate the extinguisher, remember the word

### PASS

**P**ull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism

**A**im low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire

**S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly

**S**weep the nozzle from side-to-side

- For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.
- Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory
- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out. Local fire departments or fire equipment distributors often offer hands-on fire extinguisher trainings
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately
- Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms



## Fire Extinguishers and Children

Children may not have the maturity to operate a portable fire extinguisher properly or decide whether or not a fire is small enough to be put out by the extinguisher. They may not have the physical ability to handle the extinguisher or dexterity to perform the complex actions required to put out a fire. In the process of extinguishing flames, children may not know how to respond if the fire spreads. Only adults who know how to operate portable fire extinguishers should use them.