

Fire Extinguishers: Find Them Before You Need Them

COMPANY

PROJECT

DATE

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Construction work changes access routes and brings ignition sources near materials that can burn. During deliveries, cleanup, and work on different floors, an extinguisher must stay visible, ready, and within reach. Knowing its location matters just as much as knowing how to use it.

Know where protection belongs

- OSHA requires an extinguisher rated at least 2A for each 3,000 square feet of protected building area. A leftover area of more than half that size counts as another. Travel distance from any point to the nearest extinguisher cannot exceed 100 feet. In some cases a water drum with pails or a hose line can take the place of a 2A extinguisher.
- Each floor needs at least one extinguisher rated 2A or higher. In multistory buildings, at least one must be next to a stairway. Know the location on the floor where you work.
- Where more than 5 gallons of flammable or combustible liquids, or 5 pounds of flammable gas, are being used on the job, an extinguisher rated at least 10B must be within 50 feet. The fuel tanks built into vehicles don't count toward this.
- Outdoor yard areas need extinguishers suited to the hazard in handy, easy-to-see, easy-to-reach spots, with 2A units no more than 100 feet of travel away. During welding, cutting, or heating, suitable firefighting equipment must be right there in the work area, ready for instant use.

Keep access open and equipment ready

- OSHA requires clear access to firefighting equipment at all times, and the equipment must be easy to see. Do not hide extinguishers behind drywall, pallets, carts, or debris. Keep access open throughout the job, not just when the area is first set up.
- It's good practice to find the extinguisher and read its label before you start. Look for damage or missing parts. If it has a pressure gauge, check that it reads in the operating range.
- OSHA requires extinguishers to be inspected regularly, kept in working order, and protected from freezing. Defective equipment must be replaced right away, so report it as soon as you see it.
- If equipment is missing or blocked, tell the foreman and get it fixed before starting work that needs it. Don't take another area's extinguisher unless a replacement is put there.

Respond without getting trapped

- Every site must have a way to alert workers and the local fire department, such as a phone or siren. Know how it works on your site. If a fire starts, warn others first. Don't let trying the extinguisher delay the warning.
- Only try to put out a small fire, and only if you know how to use the extinguisher and its label matches what's burning. Keep a clear way out behind you.
- Follow the extinguisher's instructions. For a typical portable unit: pull the pin, aim at the base of the fire, squeeze the handle, and sweep side to side.
- If smoke builds, fire spreads, or your way out is threatened, leave. If the extinguisher runs empty and the fire is still burning, get out. Don't go deeper inside looking for another one.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

During cleanup, a small trash fire starts near cutting work. The nearest extinguisher is behind a delivery pallet. What would you do?

Questions for the crew

1. Where is the nearest extinguisher and your escape route?
2. How do you raise the alarm here?
3. What conditions mean you should leave instead of fighting fire?

Keep extinguishers accessible, report problems, and never risk your escape to fight a fire.

Sources: 29 CFR 1926.150, Fire protection; 29 CFR 1926.151, Fire prevention; 29 CFR 1926.352, Fire prevention

Drafted with AI for review by a competent person. Clever Rook writes from the official regulation text it cites, but it doesn't know your site. Check it against your conditions and your company's safety program before use. Not legal advice.

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REVIEWED BY (COMPETENT PERSON)

REVIEW DATE

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