

# CHOOSING AND USING FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Contact the Fire Department if you would like fire extinguisher training or have any questions.

## Types of Fire Extinguishers

There are 5 primary types of fire extinguishers, each designed to put out different kinds of fires. Fire extinguishers contain different extinguishing agents such as water, carbon dioxide, dry chemical or wet chemical, depending on the kind of fire the extinguisher is intended for.

**Class A**  
Ordinary  
Combustibles



**For use with ordinary materials like cloth, wood and paper.**  
Often found in homes and businesses

**Class B**  
Flammable  
Liquids



**For use with combustible and flammable liquids like grease, gasoline, oil and oil-based paints.**  
Often found in homes and businesses

**Class C**  
Electrical  
Equipment



**For use with electrical equipment like appliances, tools or other equipment that is plugged into an outlet.** Class C fire extinguishers use an agent that doesn't conduct electricity.  
Often found in homes and businesses

**Class D**  
Combustible  
Metals



**For use with flammable metals.**  
Often found in factories.

**Class K**



**For use with vegetable oils, animal oils and fats in cooking appliances.**  
Often found in commercial kitchens (restaurants, cafeterias, catering businesses)

There are also multipurpose fire extinguishers that might be labeled "B-C" or "A-B-C" that can be used on most types of home fires. Most home improvement stores carry multipurpose fire extinguishers that cover Class A through Class C.

## When to use a fire extinguisher

Use a fire extinguisher **ONLY** when all of these questions are answered "yes."

- ✓ Have I alerted others in the building that there is a fire?
- ✓ Has someone called the fire department?
- ✓ Am I physically able to use a fire extinguisher? Young children and older adults should not use fire extinguishers.
- ✓ Is the fire small and contained in a single object or to a surface (like a pan or a wastebasket)?
- ✓ Am I safe from the fire's toxic smoke?
- ✓ Do I have a clear escape route?

If you're unsure about whether it is safe to use a fire extinguisher, and for all other situations, alert others, leave the building, and call 911 from a mobile or neighbor's phone.

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## How to operate a fire extinguisher

When operating a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:



## How to maintain a fire extinguisher

### Frequently check fire extinguishers for:

Easy access in an emergency	Be sure nothing is blocking or limiting your ability to reach it.
The recommended pressure level	Many extinguishers have gauges that show when pressure is too high or too low.
Working parts	Make sure the can, hoses and nozzles are not damaged, dented or rusted.
Cleanliness	Remove any dust, oil or grease that might be on the outside of the extinguisher.
Guidelines and instructions	Some extinguishers need to be shaken monthly; others need to be pressure tested every few years. You can recharge some fire extinguishers while others will need to be replaced if the pressure is too low.