

FIRE EXTINGUISHER FACTS

A		Common Combustibles	Wood, paper, cloth etc.
B		Flammable liquids and gases	Gasoline, propane and solvents
C		Live electrical equipment	Computers, fax machines
D		Combustible metals	Magnesium, lithium, titanium
K		Cooking media	Cooking oils and fats

Fire Extinguishers Have Limits

USED PROPERLY; a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. Portable extinguishers for home use, however, are not designed to fight large or spreading fires. Even against a small fire, they are useful under only certain conditions.

1. The operator must know how to use the extinguisher.
2. The extinguisher must be the right type, within easy reach, and in working order, fully charged.
3. The operator must have a clear escape route that will not be blocked by fire.
4. The extinguisher must be large enough to put out the fire.

Most portable extinguishers discharge completely in as few as 8 to 10 seconds.

Selecting Your Extinguisher

There are 3 basic classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire. Combustible metals and *commercial* cooking oils take a special type of extinguisher to extinguish. Do not attempt to extinguish them with a multipurpose fire extinguisher. The extinguisher you choose must be appropriate for the type of fire being fought. Multi-purpose fire extinguishers, labeled ABC may be used on all 3 classes of fire. Using the wrong type of extinguisher could endanger your safety and make the fire worse; for example, if an extinguisher that is not rated for it is used to put out a grease fire on the stove it could spread the fire outside of the frying pan rather than putting it out.

Extinguisher Size Portable extinguishers are also rated for the size of fire they can handle. This rating will appear on the label—for example, 2A:10B:C. The larger the numbers, the larger the fire that the extinguisher can put out. Keep in mind that the higher rated models are often heavier. It is most important that you be able to properly hold and operate the extinguisher.

Installation and Maintenance

Extinguishers should be installed in plain view, above the reach of children, near an escape route, and away from stoves and heating appliances. Extinguishers require routine care; read your operator's manual to learn how to inspect your extinguisher. Follow manufacturer's instructions for maintenance.

Rechargeable models must be serviced after every use. Service companies are listed in the Yellow Pages under "Fire Extinguishers." You can also bring your fire extinguisher to the Anoka Fire Station, located at 275 Harrison Street, Anoka, MN 55303. Please include your name, address and phone number when dropping it off. You can leave it in the entryway or with one of the staff members. The service company picks them up on Fridays and you will be contacted when it is returned. The cost is \$5 for a standard extinguisher that is less than six years old. The level of inspection and cost increases with the age of the extinguisher, for additional pricing and information contact jmayer@ci.anoka.mn.us or 763-576-2863.

Using a Fire Extinguisher

REMEMBER THE **PASS**-WORD

Keep your back to an unobstructed exit and stand six to eight feet away from the fire. Follow the **4 steps Pull, Aim, Squeeze, And Sweep (PASS)**

PULL THE PIN: This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other lever-release mechanisms.

AIM LOW: Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire.

SQUEEZE: The lever above the handle: This discharges the extinguisher agent. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever.)

SWEEP: From side to side: Moving carefully toward the fire, keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames appear to be out. Watch the fire area. If the fire re-ignites, repeat the process. Always be sure the fire department inspects the fire site, even if you think you've extinguished the fire.

Should You Fight the Fire?

Before you begin to fight a fire, make sure that:

1. Everyone has left, or is leaving the building;
2. The fire department has been called; and
3. The fire is confined to a small area and is not spreading.