LEADER’S GUIDE

0641-LDG-E

HOW TO SELECT AND SAFELY USE PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today...and Tomorrow
Guidelines for Using Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers save lives and property by putting out or containing small fires until the fire department arrives. Even against small fires, however, extinguishers should be used only if your answers to these questions are yes…

- Do you know how to use it and what to expect when you pull the pin? There won’t be any time to read instructions during an emergency.

- Do you know where the extinguisher is located without having to look for it?

- Do you have a clear escape route behind you, so you won’t be trapped by the fire? … And do you feel confident in your ability to put out the fire?

- Is your extinguisher large enough to fight the fire? Some fire extinguishers discharge completely in as few as eight seconds.

- Does your extinguisher match the type of fire you are fighting? There are three basic types of fires and all portable fire extinguishers are labeled according to those they can put out.

Operating a Fire Extinguisher

Before using your extinguisher, make sure your back is to an exit and that you are standing six to eight feet from the fire.

**Pull the pin:** Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you and pull out the pin located below the handle. This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher.

**Aim low:** Point the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire.

**Squeeze the lever:** Squeeze slowly and evenly to release the extinguisher.

**Sweep from side to side:** Move carefully toward the fire until the flames are out.
Key Points

1. It’s important to understand what factors will influence your decision to use a fire extinguisher (rather than to confine the fire and evacuate).

2. Are your fire extinguishers fully charged, visible and within easy reach?

3. Fight only small fires… portable fire extinguishers are not designed to fight large fires or those which are spreading quickly.

4. Have someone contact the fire department and sound the alarm before you attempt to fight the fire.

5. Always have an exit to your back while attempting to extinguish a fire.

6. Understand the limitations of a fire extinguisher… do not “overcommit” yourself in attempting to extinguish the fire.

7. Learn the PASS system: pull, aim, squeeze and sweep.

8. Use a buddy system, if possible.

9. Four steps to life safety… 1) Sound alarm  2) Call the fire department 3) If the fire is stationary, attempt to extinguish it with your back to an exit  4) Leave the building if your efforts fail, closing the doors behind you.

10. Be prepared to use makeshift fire extinguishers like a cup of coffee, can of soda or smothering the fire.

11. The wrong time to find out how to use a portable fire extinguisher is in a fire situation and reading the directions on the extinguisher.

12. Fire extinguishers should be mounted on walls near an exit and not hidden.

13. Panic may result in injury or failure to operate the fire extinguisher correctly. For example, squeezing the handle too tightly before removing the pin may prevent step “P” in the PASS method.
14. Hold regular “hands-on” fire extinguisher training in a controlled environment.

15. Call the fire department even if you put out the fire. You may have pushed the fire into hidden areas.

16. You don’t have to empty the fire extinguisher on your first try. Knock down the flames, back away and be prepared in the event of a reflash.

17. Do you know why the recommended location of a fire extinguisher is near and exit or exit pathway?

18. You should pick up the fire extinguisher before there’s a fire to become comfortable handling it… its weight, etc.

19. Be aware that in an emergency, time becomes skewed. For some people, everything seems to take longer. For others, time seems to go by very quickly. Conducting regular fire exit drills can help you manage an orderly evacuation in an emergency situation.
REVIEW QUESTIONS

Name: ___________________________       Date: _____________

Multiple Choice

1. According to State Fire Marshal, Ron Coleman, one of the primary mistakes people make with portable fire extinguishers is:
   a) holding it improperly
   b) overestimating what it can do
   c) aiming it too high

2. _________ Is the first thing you should do when you discover a fire.
   a) locate the fire extinguisher
   b) close all nearby doors
   c) call the fire department

3. In an emergency, if your first attempt to put out the fire with an extinguisher has failed, you should:
   a) stop, drop & roll
   b) wait to be rescued
   c) exit the area

4. The safest position to take when fighting a fire with a portable fire extinguisher is:
   a) 4-6 feet from the fire
   b) between the fire and your escape route
   c) near a wall
True or False

1. The “PASS” system stands for pull, aim, squeeze and sweep.
   _____ True
   _____ False

2. An ABC class extinguisher should not be used on electrical fires.
   _____ True
   _____ False

3. The most effective place to aim the extinguishing agent is at the center of the flames.
   _____ True
   _____ False

4. Operating a fire extinguisher too close to a fire may cause the fire to spread.
   _____ True
   _____ False

5. The rating of a fire extinguisher helps determine the size of fire it is capable of putting out.
   _____ True
   _____ False
ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

1. (b) overestimating what it can do… Mr. Coleman points out that fire extinguishers are called first-aid fire appliances and should only be used in the first few minutes of a fire.

2. (c) Call the fire department… After calling the fire department, you should begin evacuating people from the area and then decide if you are prepared to fight the fire with a portable fire extinguisher.

3. (c) exit the area… A fire extinguisher is a “one-shot deal.” If it doesn’t put out the fire, evacuate immediately.

4. (b) between the fire and your escape route… This will prevent you from being trapped if you are unable to extinguish the fire.

True or False

1. True… This is the most effective method of operating a portable fire extinguisher.

2. False… ABC class extinguishers can be used on class A, B or C fires.

3. False… The most effective place to aim is at the base of the fire.

4. True… The most effective distance to stand is 6-8 feet from the fire.

5. True… The rating refers to the extinguishing capabilities of the fire extinguisher.