

## Fire Extinguishers Your Small Fire Defense

**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 fire extinguishers for home use, however, are not intended to fight large or spreading fires. When a fire starts in your home or business, immediately dial 9-1-1. After dialing 9-1-1, you can try to contain the fire by using an extinguisher. Remember, however, that even against small fires or fires that are just starting, extinguishers are useful only under certain conditions.

- The operator must know how to use the extinguisher. There is no time to read directions during an emergency.
- The extinguisher must be within easy reach, in working order and fully charged.
- The extinguisher must be kept near the exit, so the user has an escape route that will not be blocked by fire.
- The extinguisher must match the type of fire you are fighting. Extinguishers that contain water are unsuitable for use on grease or electrical fires.
- The extinguisher must be large enough to put out the fire. Most portable extinguishers discharge completely in as few as eight seconds.

**Choosing Your Extinguisher:** Fire extinguishers are tested by independent testing laboratories. They will be labeled for the type of fire they are intended to extinguish.

**Classes of Fires:** There are three basic classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A red slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you only that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire.

**Class A:** Ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber and many plastics.

**Class B:** Flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, grease, tar, oil based paint, lacquer and flammable gas.

**Class C:** Energized electrical equipment, including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery, and appliances.

Many household fire extinguishers are "multi-purpose" A-B-C models, labeled for use on all three classes of fires. If you are faced with a Class "A" fire and don't have an extinguisher with an "A" symbol, don't hesitate to use one with the "B" or "C" symbol.

**Warning:** *It is dangerous to use water or an extinguisher labeled **only** for Class "A" fires on a grease or electrical fire.*

### Using Your Extinguisher

*Always Remember "PASS"*

**Pull the pin:** Some extinguishers require releasing a lock latch, pressing a puncture lever, or other first step.

**Aim low:** Point the extinguisher nozzle (or its horn or hose) at the base of the fire.

**Squeeze the handle:** This releases the extinguishing agent.

**Sweep from side to side:** Keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until it appears to be out. Watch the fire area. If fire breaks out again, repeat the process.