



WASHINGTON STATE PATROL – FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU  
INSPECTION SECTION

P.O. Box 42600, Olympia, WA 98504-2600  
Phone: 360-596-3906 Fax: 360-596-3934



## Fire Extinguishers

### Guidelines for using portable fire extinguishers in licensed care facilities.

Licensed care facilities are required to install fire extinguishers of a type and variety that will handle any small fire. Extinguishers are installed according to the fire code requirements for height and distance from exits. Fire extinguishers shall be maintained in good working order and inspected annually. NFPA 10 and IFC Section 906.6, 906.8, and Table 906.3)

Portable fire extinguishers were designed to save property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. Contact your local fire department for information about fire extinguisher classes in your area. Here are some important guidelines you should know.

#### 1. Extinguisher Types

Make sure the extinguisher matches the type of fire you are fighting. Extinguishers that contain water cannot be used on grease or electrical fires. Most portable extinguishers discharge completely in as few as eight seconds. Make sure the extinguisher is large enough to put out the fire. There are three basic classes of fires:

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

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

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

**ABC:** Class A-B-C extinguishers are "Multi-purpose" models for use on all three classes of fire.

**Class K:** Cooking oil fires, especially deep fat fryers. Usually located in kitchens.

#### 2. The Fire Emergency

Knowing what to do to save life and property in the event of a fire is the most important protection you can provide. Learn your facility's emergency procedures before an emergency occurs.

**Rescue** patients from the area of the fire, assess the fire, and call out for help, move patients from danger.

**Alarm** initiation. This may be by calling out, by pulling down on an automatic manual alarm, and/or by calling 911 to report the fire.

**Confine** the fire. Normally this is accomplished by closing the door to the room of the fire. Corridors must also be cleared and all doors closed.

**Evacuate and Extinguish** the Fire -- Assess the fire to determine if it is small enough for you to extinguish. Relocate patients in the fire area.

### 3. Using a Fire Extinguisher

- Keep your back to an exit and stand six to eight feet away from the fire. Follow the four-step **PASS** procedure.
- **PULL** the pin: This unlocks the lever and allows the extinguisher to discharge. Some extinguishers may have other seals or tamper indicators.
- **AIM** low: Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire.
- **SQUEEZE** the lever above the handle: This discharges the extinguishing 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, aim the extinguisher 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.

**In Washington State, the facility manager is required to report all fires to DSHS within 24 hours of the Incident.**

To dispose of an expired fire extinguisher, contact a fire extinguisher service company. Local laws regarding disposal of fire extinguishers may vary.

References:

- *United States Fire Administration on line at:*  
[http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/extinguishers.shtm](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/extinguishers.shtm)
- *Home Safety Council, How and When to use a Fire Extinguisher on line at:*  
[http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/SafetyGuide/sg\\_fire\\_w009.asp](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/SafetyGuide/sg_fire_w009.asp)