

MARYLAND HEIGHTS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS FACTS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When Should I Use a Fire Extinguisher?

A fire extinguisher should only be used when:

- everybody has been evacuated and accounted for at a safe meeting place.
- the Fire Service has been called.
- it is safe to do so considering the size and position of the fire.
- access to the fire is unrestricted and a quick, safe retreat is possible at all times.
- You can answer the following questions:
 - Can the extinguisher be reached without going near the fire?
 - Is the fire small and contained?
 - Can you escape safely if the fire gets bigger?

If you still can't control the fire....then leave immediately and close the door behind you.

About Fire Extinguishers

As well as knowing when it is safe to use a fire extinguisher there is practical information you need to know:

- What is the best type?
- Where should it be installed?
- How is it operated?
- How is it used efficiently on a fire?
- Where, when and how should it be serviced to maintain its efficiency?

The ABCDs

Fire is divided into four classes for the purpose of effective firefighting. Some extinguishers are more suitable than others for putting out the different classes of fires. The most commonly available and effective firefighting medium is water. The most versatile extinguisher is one filled with multi-purpose dry powder (sometimes referred to as ABC dry powder). As the name suggests it is suitable for these three classes of fire.

CLASS OF FIRE
CLASS A
Materials such as wood, paper and textiles

EXTINGUISHER
Hose (garden/reel)
Water filled extinguisher
Multi-purpose dry powder

CLASS B
Flammable liquids such as gasoline, oils
and solvents

Dry powder
Multi-purpose dry powder
Carbon Dioxide
Foam

CLASS C
Energized Electrical Equipment

TURN ELECTRICITY OFF FIRST!
Use a suitable extinguisher for the
remaining fire.

CLASS D
Metals such as sodium, potassium and
magnesium

Special dry powder

Where Should I Install Fire Extinguishers?

In the home...

The fire extinguisher should be wall mounted above the normal reach of children, in or near the kitchen. In the kitchen the extinguisher should be handy but not too close to the stove or cooking surfaces.

In the garage...

The fire extinguisher should be wall mounted above the normal reach of children, near the exit.

In the car...

The fire extinguisher should be in a position easily accessible to the driver, preferably in the passenger compartment.

In the truck...

The fire extinguisher should be positioned so it is easily accessible from a position outside the truck. The best place is mounted on the inside of the door.

In the boat...

The fire extinguisher should be positioned outside the engine compartment in a protected position where it can be reached from the open deck.

How Do I Operate a Fire Extinguisher?

Operating a fire extinguisher is very simple. Just remember the acronym P.A.S.S.

1. P ull the Pin
2. A im the Extinguisher at the base of the fire
3. S queeze the handle
4. S weep the extinguisher at the base of the fire

Continue the use of the extinguisher until the fire is definitely out or the extinguisher is completely used. Back away from the fire but never turn your back on it.

How Do I Know I Am Buying a Reputable Fire Extinguisher?

The Maryland Heights Fire Protection District recommends that all fire extinguishers comply in design, construction and performance with the National Fire Protection Association Standards. The extinguisher should also carry an Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) label.

How Do I Maintain My Fire Extinguisher?

Fire extinguishers should be inspected annually by a competent, trained service person. Look in the yellow pages for service companies close to you. You can carry out a visual inspection once a month to check for signs of tampering or deterioration. Make sure the extinguisher is still in position and that the seal remains unbroken. A fire extinguisher must be recharged after each use, regardless of the application. Some fire extinguishers are designed for one use and then to be discarded.