



Fire Extinguisher Safety

As we are approaching the holidays and are having friends and families around us we want to keep in mind that only are there possibilities of fires at work but also at home.

Fire extinguishers can be a real lifesaver. Placed in areas where they are easy to get to they can be used to put out small fires before the fire department arrives or they can be used as an escape tools to beat back a fire as you escape.

Typically around most of your work locations you will see what we call a combination ABC extinguisher. These have been developed to handle most of the fires you might encounter at work. (A wood, paper, etc.; B flammable liquids; C electrical fires) The same types of fire extinguishers are designed for home use. The difference between an industrial fire extinguisher and a home version is what they are made of. Industrial extinguishers are rechargeable with metal valves and operators, home extinguisher are one time use and usually constructed with plastic parts. Both types are designed to fire small fires. (not much bigger than a waste paper basket) The most important thing to remember with both of these is don't put yourself in harm's way. If the fire is too big GET AWAY.

The best thing to do in any fire is make sure you know your companies policies or procedure for fires. At home you want to have an escape plan. Everyone should know the quickest way out of the house or apartment and where to meet up so you know where everyone is. Once the plan is developed then practice, practice, practice.

At work follow your procedures for fire prevention, know what is expected of you. If you are authorized to use fire extinguishers make sure you received training on the types of extinguishers in your area. Before fighting any fire, remember your first defense is to notify someone. Call 911 or your security personnel to let them know where the fire is and you are trying to put it out. Don't forget that if the fire is too big evacuate the building.

The NFPA recommends that those employees authorized to fight fires, have training on a regular bases. (annually if possible)

Using today's fire extinguishers is not difficult. Basically it is a four step process:

1. Approach within 4-6 feet of the fire, remove the extinguishers safety pin.
2. Aim the nozzle or extinguisher at the base of the fire.
3. Squeeze the handle or trigger.
4. Sweep the extinguisher or nozzle back and forth. Watch as the fire goes out.

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Note: Never turn your back on the fire it could flare up, back away from it.

Once your fire extinguisher has been used it should be replaced with a good one. Never assume there's still enough product in it to use again. Most extinguishers will last only for a limited amount of time.

Lastly, remember practice good fire prevention at work and at home. Keep your location free of excessive debris, watch storage of flammable materials around hot objects, (furnaces, stoves, hot water heaters) periodically check the extinguishers in your area make sure they are charged.

From all of at ehs International Inc., have a safe and happy holiday.

(Disclaimer description on how to use a fire extinguisher above does not constitute official training)

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