

# Fire Extinguishers toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Fire Extinguishers.

A simple, 5-minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on fire extinguisher safety in the workplace.

If a fire breaks out in the workplace, you will need to know how to use a fire extinguisher correctly. However, the most important thing to consider when there is a fire is your safety; as they say, things can be replaced, people can't! So, if the fire has gotten out of hand, evacuate the worksite and call emergency services.

## Why Run a Fire Extinguisher Safety Toolbox Talk?

- To ensure you are prepared and know what to do in the event of a fire.
- To ensure you understand the different types of fire and what to do in the event of each type.
- To ensure you know how to use a fire extinguisher and its limitations.
- To ensure you can tell if a fire extinguisher is properly maintained.

## The Different Classes of Fires

Everybody should know the different classes of fires. There are four different classes of fires, and each class has different guidelines for the best way to put them out.

- **Class A** – this fire consists of standard combustible materials like paper, wood, cloth, plastic, or rubber. These types of fires can usually be put out with water or a fire extinguisher.
- **Class B** – fires involving flammable liquids, grease, or gases. These fires can be put out using foam, carbon dioxide, or a fire extinguisher.
- **Class C** – live electrical fires. Even if an electrical fire involves a burning agent in the class A category, it should only be put out with a dry chemical extinguisher agent

- **Class D** – fires involving burning combustible metals like magnesium and sodium. Special extinguishing agents are required to put class D fires out.

Before you try to extinguish a fire, you need to know which type it is. That way, you will know the correct extinguishing agent to use to put it out.

## What to Do in the Event of a Fire

If you come across a fire on the worksite, the first thing you should do is pull the alarm followed by calling emergency services. Once that is done, make sure you notify your supervisor. Activating the fire alarm will activate the worksite evacuation plan.

If the circumstances allow, you should attempt to put the fire out by using the nearest fire extinguisher. However, only attempt this if you know what class of fire it is, the fire isn't out of control (i.e, it's contained to a small area the size of a trash can), and you have been trained in how to use the extinguisher correctly.

## The P.A.S.S. Method of Using a Fire Extinguisher

If you need to use a fire extinguisher, remember the P.A.S.S method for how to use it safely and effectively. Each letter represents one of the four steps to use the fire extinguisher:

- **P = Pull the pin.** Grab the extinguisher, hold it away from your body, and release the lock pin.
- **A = Aim.** Aim the extinguisher towards the base of the fire (always aim it at the base and not the flames or smoke as this won't put the fire out).
- **S = Squeeze.** Slowly squeeze the lever while it is pointed at the base of the fire.
- **S = Sweep.** Move the extinguisher side to side while squeezing the lever until the fire is out.

When you go through the PASS steps, hopefully this puts the fire out. But it needs to be pointed out that fire extinguishers have limitations. If the fire is larger than a trash can, don't attempt to put it out with a small, standard fire extinguisher. Pull the fire alarm and evacuate the worksite.

## Fire Extinguisher Maintenance

To keep the fire extinguishers in the workplace in safe working order, here are some good general tips:

- All fire extinguishers need to be checked every 30 days. This needs to be documented.
- Check that the pin is still properly in place.
- Check that the pressure is correct. There is a gauge with an arrow that must be pointing within the green zone of the extinguisher. If not, it needs to be replaced.

## Key Takeaways

- Know where the closest fire extinguisher is located when working, especially when there are fire risks.
- Make sure you know how it works and if not, undertake training.
- Make sure you know what the PASS method is and how it works.
- Understand the times when it's appropriate to use and the limitations of the fire extinguisher.
- If you are unsure of anything to do with fire extinguishers, ask a supervisor.

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