



Township of Lower Makefield
OFFICE OF THE FIRE SERVICE DIRECTOR
1100 Edgewood Road Yardley, PA 19067
(267) 274-1127 firesafety@lmt.org



Fire Extinguisher Information

A fire extinguisher is a handheld active fire protection device usually filled with a dry or wet chemical used to extinguish or control small fires, often in emergencies.

There are five primary types of fire extinguishers, each designed to put out different kinds of fires.



For use with **ordinary materials like cloth, wood, and paper**. Often found in homes and businesses



For use with **combustible and flammable liquids like grease, gasoline, oil, and oil-based paints**. Often found in homes and businesses



For use with **electrical equipment like appliances, tools, or other equipment that is plugged in**. Often found in homes and businesses



For use with **flammable metals**, often found in factories

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For use with **vegetable oils, animal oils and fats in cooking appliances**. Often found in commercial kitchens (restaurants, cafeterias, catering businesses)



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There are also multipurpose fire extinguishers that might be labeled "B-C" or "A-B-C." Most home improvement stores carry multipurpose fire extinguishers that cover Class A through Class C.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) fire extinguishers are required in the following occupancy types:

Ambulatory Health Care
Apartments
Assemblies
Businesses
Day Cares
Hotel & Dormitory
Industrial
Lodging & Rooming

Mercantile
Occupancies in special structures
Health care
Educational
Storage
Detention & Correctional
Residential Board and Care

Fire Extinguishers are not required in one-and two-family homes but are strongly recommended to have a few in the home. They should be in the kitchen, garage, basement and if grilling by the grill.

Fire extinguishers should be placed where they are readily accessible and visible in the event of a fire. Fire extinguishers should be hung on the wall and clearly marked with signs or lights. Fire extinguishers should not be higher than 3 ½ feet from the ground.



When to use a fire extinguisher

Fire extinguishers can be helpful on a small fire. Consider the following points when deciding whether to use a fire extinguisher:

- Have I alerted others in the building that there's a fire?
- Has someone called the fire department?
- Am I physically able to use a fire extinguisher?
- Is the fire small and contained in a single object (like a pan or a wastebasket)?



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- Am I safe from the fire's toxic smoke?
- Do I have a clear escape route?

Use a fire extinguisher when all these questions are answered "yes." If you're unsure about whether it's safe to use a fire extinguisher, and for all other situations, alert others, leave the building, and call 911 from a mobile or neighbor's phone. It is not recommended that children use fire extinguishers.

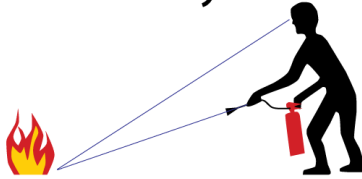
When operating a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

- **P**ull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you and release the locking mechanism.
- **A**im low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly.
- **S**weep the nozzle from side-to-side.

Pull
the pin



Aim at base
of fire 8'-10'
away



Squeeze



Sweep



Lifespan Of A Portable Fire Extinguisher

With proper care, fire extinguishers **should last at least 10 to 12 years**. Once it reaches 12 years of age, your extinguishers require hydrostatic testing to verify the integrity of the outer shell. If it passes the test, you can recharge the extinguisher and continue using it for another 12 years.



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How to dispose of a Portable Fire Extinguisher

1. Determine what type of fire extinguisher you have.
2. Has it ever been used? **YOU CANNOT "TEST" A FIRE EXTINGUISHER.** DRY CHEMICAL extinguishers will usually NOT hold a charge after partial use. This is also true for all your personal home and vehicle dry chemical extinguishers. While the gauge may hold steady in the green immediately after a slight use, check it the next day and you'll find the gauge on **EMPTY!** This is because upon use the dry powder gets inside the seals and allows the nitrogen carrier to escape over a period of time. After **ANY** use a BC or ABC extinguisher **MUST** be serviced and recharged. This is very important for home extinguishers also; **YOU SHOULD HAVE THE EXTINGUISHER REFILLED AFTER ANY USE**
3. Some fire extinguishers are rechargeable if it is up to the current standards. Contact a Fire Safety Equipment dealer to determine if your fire extinguisher is rechargeable.
4. Consider taking your fire extinguisher to a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection program if one is offered where you live, and the program accepts fire extinguishers or contact the office and see if the fire company could use them for training (if the fire extinguisher is still charged). You may put it in the trash provided:



- You release any pressure contained in the canister by shooting a small amount into an open area or plastic bag.
- You let the canister sit for a few days, making sure the pressure has been released.
- Once you are confident there is no longer any pressure, twist off the top and dispose of it in a trash bag in your regular garbage.



Any fire extinguisher made prior to 1960 are often valued by collectors, and can be very dangerous. These extinguishers may contain carbon tetrachloride. Carbon tetrachloride works extremely well as a fire extinguisher, but is a known carcinogen. Exposure can be fatal if enough of the chemical is inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

When heated, carbon tetrachloride produces phosgene, more commonly known as nerve gas. Use extreme caution when handling older fire extinguishers.



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Fire Grenades

From the 1870s through the early 1900s, when a small fire broke out in the interior of the home, a glass orb known as a fire grenade was taken from a wall-mounted-bracket or kept handy next to the fireplace and thrown at the base of the flames. The grenades were filled, in some cases, with salt water (used because it would not freeze in the winter cold), others were filled with carbon tetrachloride and sealed with a cork and cement. The concept was simple; the glass orb shattered on contact and the contents, as it spewed onto the flames, vaporized into fire extinguishing gas.



In addition to being able to be thrown at the fire, the more recent fire grenades usually had a bracket assembly that suspended them directly over areas of particular fire risk, like boilers and furnaces. If high temperatures reach some styles of brackets, it would release the grenade that would then crash and shatter, releasing the fire suppression liquid. Others had heat-activated, spring-loaded triggers that would break the bottom seal, spilling the liquid onto a deflector that would distribute it over a larger area. There is one brand that has an aluminum can instead of a glass bottle. This device is under pressure and has a heat-activated sprayer head.

If one of these “fire grenades” are found in your home, DON’T PANIC! Most likely it has been there for many years and causing no harm to you or your family, actually you have been protected secretly over the years from any fires that may have broken out in your home. Gently take them down, wrap them in newspaper, or bubble wrap and place them in a sturdy container. They will have to be disposed of at a household hazardous waste collection site. If you do not feel comfortable doing this yourself please contact the office and one of our Fire Marshal’s would be happy to assist you.