4 - Fire Extinguishers: Safety Training

EH&S – MGA

Goals: This safety session should teach you to:
A. Know how to select the right fire extinguisher for a fire.
B. Know how and when to use a fire extinguisher.

OSHA Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.157

1. OSHA Requires Most Employers to Have and Maintain Fire Extinguishers
A. Approved, fully charged, operable extinguishers must be placed and identified, so employees can reach them easily.
B. Extinguishers must be visually inspected monthly and tested at least yearly to be sure they're working properly.
C. Be sure to find the fire extinguishers near you in your work site.

2. Use Fire Extinguishers Only on Small, Contained Fires
A. If in doubt, sound alarm, evacuate properly, and let trained firefighters handle it.

3. Use Class A Extinguishers on Fires of Ordinary Combustibles
A. They wet down and cool fires involving paper, cloth, trash, wood, etc.
B. Class A extinguisher numbers (1-A, 2-A, etc.) indicate the size fire each can handle.
   o The higher the number, the larger the fire area it can handle.
C. OSHA requires Class A’s to be no more than 75 feet from the area of likely use.

4. Use Class B Extinguishers on Fires Involving Gases or Flammable Liquids
A. They cut off oxygen to, or reduce flame in, fires involving combustibles such as grease, oil, paint, solvents.
B. Class B extinguisher numbers (5-B,10-B) tell how many square feet each can handle.
C. OSHA requires Class B's to be no more than 50 feet from the area of likely use.

5. Use Class C Extinguishers on Fires on or Near Electrical Equipment
A. They use carbon dioxide or a dry chemical to put out these fires.
B. Never use water on an electrical fire. Water conducts electricity and could cause a dangerous shock to the person holding the extinguisher.
C. Class C’s don’t have numbers

6. Use ABC or BC Extinguishers on Combination Fires
A. The letters identify the type of fire they can handle
7. Use Class D Extinguishers on Combustible Metal Fires
   A. They're used on sodium, magnesium, zinc, potassium, powdered aluminum, titanium, and other combustible metal fires.
   B. They must be within 75 feet of operations that generate combustible metal powders, flakes, or shavings.
   C. Class D's are considered "special hazard" protection and have no numbers.

8. Use Extinguishers Properly
   A. If you feel a fire is small enough to handle with an extinguisher:
   B. Pull the pin.
   C. Stand about 8 feet from the fire.
   D. Aim carefully at the base of the fire; you probably won't have a second chance.
      1. Be especially careful not to spread combustible fires (e.g., by blowing burning papers out of a wastebasket).
   E. Squeeze the trigger.

Summation: Know How to Choose and When to Use a Fire Extinguisher

The right extinguisher, properly used, can handle small fires. In all other cases, turn in an alarm and leave the job to trained firefighters.