

# Fire control

A fire extinguisher in the hands of a properly trained person can be a life-saving tool. However, most workers don't know the proper way to use one.

The U.S. Fire Administration ([www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov)) recommends that people get proper training before using a fire extinguisher. Any local fire department can provide the training.

Fire extinguishers are coded for the type of fire you could be fighting:

- Class A – Ordinary combustibles such as cloth, wood, rubber, paper and many plastics
- Class B – Flammable liquids such as grease, gasoline, oil and oil-based paints
- Class C – Appliances, tools or other equipment that is electronically energized
- Class D – Flammable metals
- Class K – Vegetable or animal oils or fats in cooking appliances

Some extinguishers can be used on more than one kind of fire

Portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. They contain a limited amount of extinguishing agent and need to be used efficiently so the agent is not wasted. Use a fire extinguisher only if:

- You have alerted occupants and someone has called the fire department
- The fire is small and contained to a single object, such as a wastebasket
- You are safe from toxic smoke
- You have identified a means of escape

Regardless of what kind of extinguisher you have, keep it maintained to ensure that:

- It is in a conspicuous place
- The pressure is at the recommended level
- All parts are operating properly; hoses or nozzles are free of insects or debris
- The outside casing is clean and has no oil or grease on it.

