

Fire Extinguisher Question & Answers

Each year, about 440 people in the United States die inside their home after trying to fight a fire with a fire extinguisher instead of getting out safely and calling the fire department.

The reasons this happens, according to the National Fire Protection Association are:

- They do not know how to properly use a fire extinguisher. Most people can not learn how to use a fire extinguisher by simply reading directions. Using a fire extinguisher properly requires training from professionals. It is even more difficult to read directions for the first time during an emergency.
- Not all fire extinguishers will work on all fires. Home fire extinguishers are made for very small fires that can be put out quickly.
- People try to fight fires for too long and are overcome by poisonous gasses produced by the fire.
- The fire is bigger than the extinguisher they tried to use was designed for.

The American Red Cross recommends the following advice for safety during fires:

- The safest thing to do in case of a fire is to get away from it safely and call the fire department from another location away from the fire. Have a fire escape plan and a safe meeting point for your family. Practice your plan!
- It still is a good idea to place a fire extinguisher in your home near each place where fire may start, such as the kitchen, garage, workshop, barbecue area etc. An extinguisher should only be used on a very small fire that can be put out quickly. Also, install smoke detectors and test them monthly. Replace batteries once a year or when the alarm does not sound when the unit is tested.
- Get a fire extinguisher that is rated A-B-C, which is designed for fires that most often occur at home. For more information on the type and size of fire extinguisher you need for specific locations in your home, contact your local fire department.
- Get training from your local fire department in how to use the fire extinguisher that you get. Not all fire extinguishers work in the same way, so it's important that you get training and practice with the same type of fire extinguisher that you may use.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacing or recharging fire extinguishers.
- If you try to use a fire extinguisher on a fire and the fire is not out in 30 seconds, drop the extinguisher and get out.