



# THE ABC'S (AND K) OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission/  
Health & Safety Division

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Did you know that one fire extinguisher does not fit all fires? Just as there is a right tool for every job, there is an extinguisher for every fire. The class of an extinguisher, identified on its nameplate, corresponds to the type(s) of fire the extinguisher controls. The five main classes of extinguishers are A, B, C, D, and K. These correspond to different types of fires. The following describes the classes of fire and the kind of extinguisher that can be used on each. The National Fire Protection Association added Class K to Portable Extinguisher Standard 10 in 1998.

## **Class A**

These fires include burning wood, paper, trash, and other materials that have glowing embers when they burn.

Extinguisher to use: Use a Class A or Class ABC extinguisher. Remember—a Class A extinguisher contains water and should be used only on Class A fires. Used on gasoline, it can spread the fire, or used on electrical fires, it can cause you to be electrocuted.

## **Class B**

These are fires involving flammable liquids and gases, such as gasoline, solvents, paint thinners, grease, liquefied petroleum gas, and acetylene.

Extinguisher to use: Use Class B or Class ABC extinguishers.

## **Class C**

These are fires in energized electrical equipment.

Extinguisher to use: Use a Class BC or Class ABC extinguishers.

## **Class D**

Class D fires are combustible metal fires. Certain metals, such as sodium, titanium, magnesium, potassium, uranium, lithium, plutonium, calcium and others are flammable. When one of these combustible metals ignites, it can easily and rapidly spread to surrounding Class A materials.

Extinguisher to use: Use a Class D or ABD extinguisher.

## **Class K**

These are kitchen fires. These fires generally involve vegetable oils, animal oils, or fats in cooking appliances. Class K extinguishers should be in commercial kitchens, including those

found in restaurants, cafeterias, and caterers.

Extinguisher to use: Use a Class K extinguisher.

On most construction jobs, Class A, B and C fires are of concern. Consequently, the best extinguisher to have on this type job is a multi-purpose Class ABC extinguisher, which contains a dry, powdered chemical under pressure. In food service, you will find high temperature cooking oils for frying, and there should be a Class K (for Kitchen) extinguisher.

**Some important points to remember:**

- Use the fire extinguisher class that corresponds to the class of the fire.
- Never use a Class A extinguisher, which contains water or foam, on a liquid or electrical fire.
- Know where extinguishers are located and how to use them. Follow the directions printed on the label. Remember the acronym **PASS**
  - **P** – Pull the Pin
  - **A** – Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire
  - **S** – Squeeze the trigger
  - **S** – Sweep the nozzle until the fire is out.
- Keep the area around the fire extinguisher clear for easy access.
- Don't hide the extinguisher by hanging coats, rope, or other materials on it.
- Take proper care of the extinguishers just as you do your other tools.
- Never remove tags from extinguishers. They indicate the last time the extinguisher was serviced and inspected.
- Report defective or suspect extinguishers to your supervisor so they can be replaced or repaired.
- Look for cracked hoses, plugged nozzles, and corrosion when inspecting extinguishers. Also, look for damage that may have been done by equipment running into the extinguishers.
- Don't use extinguishers for purposes other than fighting fires.

**Nobody wants a fire.  
But if one starts, know what extinguishers to use  
and how to use them.**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Company Name</u>	
<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Meeting Location</u>	<u>Person Conducting Meeting</u>

**Items Discussed:**

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**Problem Areas or Concerns:**

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**Attendees:**

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**Comments:**

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