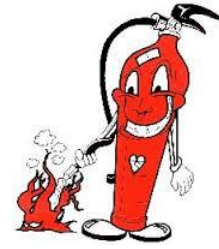




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Elements of A Fire Extinguisher Training Program

Fire extinguisher training is critical if occupants are to use them effectively. Each fire extinguisher training program should be tailored to the specific hazards located in the building or area and adjusted for each organization's needs. Although programs will differ they should all include some basic information that are common to both classroom and practical training sessions.

1. Describe the basic sources of fire and various ways of stopping the combustion process. Fire is a chemical reaction that occurs when fuel, oxygen and an ignition source combine. Fire extinguishers work by removing one or more of these sources, with different extinguishers working in different ways.
2. Describe the classes of fire and the extinguishers that should be used in each situation. Using the wrong type of fire extinguisher can actually increase the fire hazard, and endanger the user and other occupants.
3. Focus on assessing and measuring fire risks. Because portable fire extinguishers are designed for incipient stage firefighting, occupants should be familiar with how to properly assess a fire situation. Considerations used in making a "fight or flight" assessment include the size and location of the fire; levels of heat, smoke or fumes; and the availability of sufficient egress routes.
4. Ensure employees understand how the use of fire extinguishers fits into the overall emergency response protocols. The first step is to alert other occupants and the fire department before trying to suppress the fire.
5. Most important, train people on the actual operation of fire extinguishers. Nothing compares to actual practice. Hands-on training is by far the best method to teach people to use a portable extinguisher properly. Watching videos or providing classroom demonstration is no substitute for seeing a fire, reaching for an extinguisher, pulling the pin and squeezing the trigger. People who haven't actually used an extinguisher are amazed at how little discharge time one has. A standard 10-pound ABC extinguisher takes about 20 seconds to discharge.
6. Training not only builds confidence, it also identifies overconfidence. Hands-on training helps people appreciate the limits of portable extinguishers.