



PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT



Figures from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) show that each year, some 85,000 fires occur in the workplace, causing an annual average of 89 deaths to employees and customers and a massive \$1.856 billion in direct property damage. And, that does not consider indirect costs. Like preparing a new product for sale or closing the book on a quarter

Preventing a fire or safely containing one - takes planning. Steps may include:

- Easily accessible fire extinguishers
- Proper housekeeping and maintenance
- Communicated and practiced, evacuation plans
- Equipment shutdown
- Notification of authorities
- Familiarity with the type of items that might burn and release toxins

Help your employees understand their role in a disaster or fire emergency by creating an environment of safety, that is, awareness, safety training, commodity knowledge, fire chemistry, alarm, sprinkler and extinguisher use with hands on experience.

If fire extinguishers are available for employee use, it is the employer's responsibility to educate employees on the principles and practices of using a fire extinguisher and the hazards associated with fighting small or developing fires.

This education must be provided annually and when a new employee is first hired. Employees, who have been designated to use fire extinguishers as part of the emergency action plan, must be trained on how to use fire extinguishers appropriately in the workplace.

Where training is specialized and designed for specific hazards the training and education must be focuses on developing the employee to improving product awareness, management skills, and hazards associated with these products. This training must also be provided annually and when employees are first assigned associated duties.

It goes without saying, and according the NFPA standards, fire extinguishers that are in service, are required to be inspected monthly by the owner or their designee. Look out for:

- Extinguisher is located in the designated place
- No obstructions to access or visibility
- Pressure gage readings are in operable range
- Identify fullness by determined weight or hefting
- No damage or rust is found

It is required that all in-service extinguishers are maintained and serviced annually by a professional trained service person familiar with and trained on the type of extinguisher located in your facility.