

SAFETY MEMO

November 14th, 2022 – How to Use a Fire Extinguisher



Did you know?

Important: You are never obligated to attempt to control a fire using a fire extinguisher. Your safety, and the safety of those around you, is more important than attempting to control a fire.

What is the purpose of a portable fire extinguisher?

The portable fire extinguisher is used to extinguish a fire that has recently started and to reduce damage related to it.

Knowing that most residential fires start in the kitchen or bedroom and that the main causes of fire are related to human activity (cooking, lit cigarette, etc.), buying a portable fire extinguisher could save your life and your property¹.

Usage

When you must use a portable fire extinguisher, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Make sure that the premises have been evacuated and that it is safe for you to use the portable fire extinguisher
- Call emergency services (911 in US and Canada, 112 in EU countries) before using the fire extinguisher
- Make sure an exit is available behind you before intervening
- Make sure the fire extinguisher is filled
- Stand about 3 m (10 feet) from the fire, and
- Use the PASS system (for all types of fire extinguishers):
 - **Pull** the pin from the fire extinguisher
 - **Aim** the hose to the base of the fire
 - **Squeeze** the trigger or top handle

- **Sweep** the burning area with the fire extinguisher jet until the fire is completely extinguished



Figure 1: Courtesy of VectorStock

What to know about firefighting

Never fight a fire if:

- You do not know what is burning
- You do not know what type of fire extinguisher to use
- You do not know how to use a fire extinguisher
- The fire spreads beyond its starting point
- Your instinct tells you not to intervene

Do not fight a fire if you do not have confidence in your ability to handle the situation (even if you have previous firefighting training/experience), or if you do not have the right type of fire extinguisher. Trigger the fire alarm, evacuate the area, and call the fire department (CCOHS)².

¹ Section de la recherche sur les causes et les circonstances des incendies. Rapport sur les activités du Service de sécurité incendie de Montréal 2013. Retrieved from <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/sim/en/activity-report>

² Recommendation issued by the *Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety* (CCOHS) https://www.cchst.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/fire_extinguishers.html

