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**FIRE FACT NO. 044 CHECKLIST(s) : 06**  
**TITLE : FIRE EXTINGUISHER MAINTENANCE / USE**  
**CHECKLIST ITEM(s) : 06-27**  
**REFERENCE(s) : 91-101/31-1.3.1, K.A.R. 22-10**  
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**Classification of portable extinguishers** - Portable extinguishers are rated for effectiveness and the types of fires it will extinguish. Some extinguishers can be used on multiple types of fires while others are only effective on a specific type. The classifications are:

- A – ordinary combustibles
- B – flammable liquids
- C – electrical
- D – combustible metals

The classification of extinguishers consists of a NUMERAL, such as “2,” that indicates the relative extinguishing effectiveness, followed by a LETTER for the class of fire.

This agency recommends that an extinguisher with a minimum of a 2A UL rating be used in all but high hazard areas of a structure. In high hazard areas where Class B flammable materials are used or stored in above normal quantities, extinguishers with a minimum of a 2A 10BC rating should be installed unless otherwise indicated. Personnel should be trained in the proper use of the extinguisher.

**Inspection** - An inspection is a "quick check" that an extinguisher is available and will operate. It is intended to give reasonable assurance that the extinguisher is fully charged and operable. All extinguishers shall be inspected when initially placed in service and thereafter at approximately 30-day intervals. When this monthly inspection is performed, the date of the inspection and the initials of the person performing the inspection shall be recorded. There should be space provided on the annual maintenance tag. This type of an inspection may be performed by facility personnel without being certified by the Kansas State Fire Marshal.

**Annual Maintenance** – Extinguishers shall be subjected to maintenance not more than one year apart or when specifically indicated by an inspection. Maintenance procedures shall include a thorough examination of the mechanical parts, the extinguishing agent, and the expelling means. **Annual maintenance may only be performed by personnel of a firm certified by the Kansas State Fire Marshal.**

**Six Year Maintenance** - Every six years, stored pressure extinguishers that require a 12-year hydrostatic test shall be emptied and subjected to the applicable maintenance procedures. When the applicable maintenance procedures are performed during periodic recharging or hydrostatic testing, the six-year requirement shall begin from that date. **Six year maintenance may only be performed by personnel of a firm certified by the Kansas State Fire Marshal.**



## Kansas State Fire Marshal Prevention Division

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**Hydrostatic Testing** - All refillable fire extinguishers require hydrostatic testing at intervals that vary according to the type of extinguisher. Hydrostatic testing is required for all stored pressure extinguishers every 12 years, for stored pressure water or foam type extinguishers every 5 years and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) extinguishers every 5 years. CO<sub>2</sub> type extinguishers may only be tested by a firm with a DOT-certified test station.

Hydrostatic testing shall be performed by personnel of firms certified by the Kansas State Fire Marshal, trained in pressure testing procedures and safeguards, having suitable testing equipment, facilities, and appropriate servicing manuals. For more information on this certification, see Fire Fact 048.

**Distribution of Fire Extinguishers** - Portable fire extinguishers are most effectively utilized when they are readily available in sufficient number and with adequate extinguishing capacity for use by persons familiar with their operation.

In fire emergencies where extinguishers are relied upon, someone usually has to travel from the fire to obtain the device, and then return to the fire before using it. The time required to accomplish this is determined mainly by the travel distance involved in securing the extinguisher and placing it in operation.

Travel distance is the actual distance the user of the extinguisher will need to walk. Consequently, travel distance will be affected by partitions, location of doorways, aisles, piles of stored materials, machinery, desks, tables, and other items. For schools the travel distance to a fire extinguisher shall not exceed 75 feet unless in a high hazard areas. In high hazard areas, such as wood or metal shops or chemistry laboratories, the travel distance shall be no more than 50 feet.

**Placement of Extinguishers** – The actual placement of fire extinguishers can best be accomplished through a physical survey of the area to be protected. In general, locations should be selected that will provide uniform distribution, easy access, be free from obstruction by storage and/or equipment, be near normal paths of exit travel, be free from potential physical damage, and be readily visible.

**Recommendations for Fire Extinguisher Use** - Portable fire extinguishers should only be used after the fire alarm for the building has been sounded, after full or partial building evacuation has begun, and after the fire department has been called. Only the proper extinguisher classification should be used. Serious injury or death could occur if the wrong fire extinguisher is used to try to put out a fire. Extinguishers should only be used by individuals trained in its use and on small, contained fires such as trash cans, electrical boxes, and kitchen or small equipment.

