

## AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS

### PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

#### Objective:

To know how to identify the types of fire extinguishers and be able to properly use them.

#### Background:

Fire extinguishers can put out or control a fire until help arrives. Use portable units as first-aid or emergency units on small fires or in the initial stages of the fire. The discharge time on most portable units is only seconds, so plan an escape route. Stay low and avoid breathing the smoke and extinguishing agent. If the fire starts to spread, GET OUT!

#### Selecting the Proper Fire Extinguisher:

The universal classification system has four designations for fire extinguishers: class A; B; C; D. Class labels are based on the size of a fire to be extinguished and the contained extinguishing agent. A 20B rating is recommended for non-expert user. Combination extinguishers are suitable for more than one class of fire and are marked as such.

Class	Symbol	Type of Fuel
A	green triangle	ordinary combustibles
B	red square	flammable liquids
C	blue circle	electrical equipment
D	yellow star	combustible metals

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The following chart will help classify fires that may occur on the farm.

Location	Size Range (lbs.)	Suggested Placement
Farm Shop	One Unit, (5-10)	Near exit door
Combine	First Unit, (5-10) Second Unit, (5-10)	Near cab door On opposite side of cab at ground level
Baler	One Unit, (21/2)	On structural member
Car or Truck	One Unit, (21/2-5)	Accessible to driver
Barn or outbuildings	One Unit, (5-10)	In an accessible location

### Reading the Label:

The label states the amount of dry or wet chemical contained in the extinguisher. Higher classifications equal greater extinguishing capacity. For example, an extinguisher classified as 4A can extinguish twice as much of a class A fire as an extinguisher classified as 2A. Look for the classification or rating to determine the extinguisher's capacity.

### Operating a Fire Extinguisher:

Before you need to use the extinguisher:

- Examine for defects at time of purchase.
- Read the operating instructions on the label.
- Make location of extinguisher known.

Follow these Steps To Operate an Extinguisher:

- Remove from the mounting bracket by grasping the unit by the carrying handle and the base and carry it to the fire.
- Pull the locking pin to break the tamper seal. If the unit has a hose, remove the hose from its retaining clip.

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- Move the extinguisher as close to the fire as possible. Grasp the hose in one hand and press or squeeze the handle or trigger release with the other. (If the unit is a CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher, grasping the plastic discharge horn may freeze the hand.) If the unit has no hose, direct the stream of extinguishing agent by moving the extinguisher.
- Use a side to side sweeping motion at the base of the flames starting from the near edge to the rear of the fire and then up the vertical surface.
- Always leave an escape route when fighting a fire.

### Inspection and Maintenance of a Fire Extinguisher:

Inspect units monthly to ensure good working condition and adequate protection. Rotate the fire extinguisher to keep chemical from caking. Recharge when needed. Have units inspected annually by qualified service person.

#### Inspection Procedure:

- Are all extinguishers in their recommended location?
- Is there enough pressure to discharge the contents of the extinguisher (check the gauge)? Replace or recharge the unit as needed.
- Is the tamper seal intact?
- Is the unit damaged?
- Is the hose and nozzle unobstructed?

### Review the Following Points:

- Be prepared. Read the unit label before you need to use it for a fire.
- Inspect fire extinguishers monthly for proper functioning.
- Ensure that all designated locations have a fire extinguisher.

Based upon: Ohio State University Extension. *Fire Extinguishers*. Retrieved from website <http://ohioline.osu.edu/atts/modules.html>

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