

# **Proper Use of Fire Extinguishers**

## **A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS**

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

## **DURING THE MEETING**

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

**Proper Use of Fire Extinguishers**

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Bring the different types of fire extinguishers that are supplied for your work area and demonstrate proper usage to the employees.

**Fire**--you think it can't happen, but it does, because even the most modern building is not completely fireproof. Almost anything will burn under certain conditions. Fire is especially dangerous in hospitals because of the number of people who are unable to rescue themselves. You can't be too prepared or have too much knowledge about fire safety.

Using fire extinguishers is only one action in a series of actions that you must take in a fire emergency. Briefly, the complete sequence of actions you should take upon discovering a fire is:

- First, remove any patients who are in immediate danger. Patient rooms are likely sites for fires; smoking is the leading cause of fires in health care facilities.
- Sound the fire alarm to get professional help to the scene before you try to extinguish the fire yourself.
- Contain the fire by closing doors and windows; this decreases the supply of oxygen. Fire needs oxygen to continue to burn. When the alarm sounds, other hospital employees should close all windows and doors, including fire and smoke separation doors.
- Extinguish the fire. Small fires can be smothered with a blanket.
- Evacuate patients if directed to do so by the officials handling the fire emergency.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

The most important thing to remember about fire extinguishers is that you must use the correct type for the kind of fire.

There are several types of fires:

**Class A**--combustibles, such as wood, paper or cloth.

**Class B**--flammable liquids.

**Class C**--electrical.

There are several types of fire extinguishers: foam, carbon dioxide, soda acid, pump tank, gas cartridge, multipurpose dry chemical and ordinary dry chemical.

Most extinguishers have labels that list the types of fires for which they can be used.

The most common extinguisher in hospitals is the multipurpose dry chemical type. It can be used for any class of fire. However, if the tag on the extinguisher is not labeled ABC, you must know the type of fire for which that particular extinguisher can be used. The following table shows the types of fires and the types of extinguishers that can be used for each.

<u>CLASS A FIRES</u>	<u>CLASS B FIRES</u>	<u>CLASS C FIRES</u>
Foam	Foam	Carbon Dioxide
Soda Acid	Carbon Dioxide	Multipurpose Dry
Pump Tank (contains plain water)	Multipurpose Dry	Chemical
Gas Cartridge(water expelled by carbon dioxide gas)	Ordinary Dry	Chemical
	Chemical	-

**These tips on using the various types of fire extinguishers may help:**

- Foam should not be sprayed directly into flames, but should be allowed to fall lightly on the fire.
- Carbon dioxide should be directed at the edge of the flames, then moved gradually forward and upward.
- Streams from soda acid or gas cartridge extinguishers should be directed at the base of the flame.
- When using pump tanks, place a foot on the foot rest and aim at the base of the flames.
- Dry chemical extinguishers should be directed at the base of the fire.

Again, it is important to emphasize the necessity of using the correct type of extinguisher for the fire at hand. You should not use a water type extinguisher for a flammable liquid fire because this would cause the fire to spread; and you would not use this type of extinguisher on an electrical fire because this would expose you to a serious or fatal shock.

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

At this point, employees should be shown how to handle extinguishers properly (in an upright position) and how to release the pins. The table discussed earlier in this talk may be reproduced and given to each employee, or a copy can be posted in each work area.

Never take the attitude that any building is fireproof or that fires won't happen. Do what you can to prevent fires, but always be prepared by knowing what action to take if one occurs. Know where alarms and fire extinguishers are located. Good teamwork is a must. Don't get burned—when you think of fire, think of safety!