

Portable Fire Extinguisher Policy



BENEFIT

Every workplace needs a policy ensuring the appropriate selection, use, storage and maintenance of fire extinguishers.

This Model Policy is based on Ontario OHS Regulations and Fire Codes but can be adapted for any other jurisdiction.

1. PURPOSE

ABC Company has adopted this Policy to ensure appropriate selection, use, inspection and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers in accordance with the [province name] Occupational Health and Safety Act ('Act'), the related occupational health and safety regulations ('OHS Regulations'), [province and municipality names] Fire Codes and the ABC Company Occupational Health and Safety Program ('OHS Program'), and other applicable standards and requirements.

2. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Policy:

***Hydrostatic Testing** means testing required every twelve (12) years on pressure vessels used as fire extinguishers performed by persons trained in pressure testing procedures;

* **Inspection** means a monthly check typically provided by staff or designated individuals to verify that a fire extinguisher:

- o Is available and will operate;
- o Is in its designated place;

- o Has not been actuated or tampered with; and
 - o Is free of obvious or physical damage or condition to prevent its operation.
- * **Licensed Contractor** means certified fire safety personnel that carry out annual maintenance examinations, including hydrostatic testing;
- * **Maintenance** means a thorough annual examination of the fire extinguisher and any necessary repair or replacement by licensed contractors that will normally reveal if hydrostatic testing or internal maintenance is required.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

ABC Company recognizes that responding effectively to fires and other workplace emergencies is critical to saving lives, preventing serious injuries, and minimizing damage to health, the environment, and property. Accordingly, ABC Company will make all reasonable efforts not only to prevent such emergencies but protect workers from any emergencies that do occur despite our efforts to prevent them.

4. WORKERS PROTECTED BY THIS POLICY

The intent of this Policy is to protect the health and safety of **all workers** engaged to perform work for ABC Company at sites where fires or other emergencies may occur regardless of who pays or employs those workers, including:

- Full- and part-time workers paid by ABC Company;
- Temporary employees placed by an outside agency to work at the site;
- Contract labourers engaged to perform work at the site;
- Volunteers who work at the site for free; and
- Workers employed by constructors, contractors, and subcontractors to perform work at the site under a contract with ABC Company.

5. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Employer

The owner, corporate officers and directors, upper managers, and other representatives of ABC Company who may be considered an 'employer' under the Act will carry out their employer duties by:

- Providing the personnel, equipment, and other resources required to implement this Policy;

- Overseeing development and implementation of this Policy;
- Ensuring that all personnel are educated on and trained to perform their duties under this Policy;
- Ensuring that workers employed by outside constructors, contractors, and subcontractors to perform work at ABC Company work sites are notified of and required to cooperate with the implementation of this Policy;
- Consulting with the workplace Joint Health and Safety Committee ('Safety Committee') or Health and Safety Representative ('Safety Representative') in developing, implementing, and reviewing this Policy

5.2. Safety Coordinator

The ABC Company safety coordinator, facility manager, or other designated individual(s) in charge of safety at the workplace is responsible for:

- Conducting the annual maintenance examinations of fire extinguishers;
- Scheduling and coordinating with a licensed contractor the required annual maintenance and hydrostatic testing of portable fire extinguishers;
- Performing the required monthly inspection;
- Surveying the entire workplace for extinguisher selection and distribution during fire/general safety reviews; and
- Exchanging used or non-operable extinguishers in a timely manner.

5.3. Department Heads

Department heads are responsible for:

- Scheduling and coordinating with a licensed contractor the required annual maintenance and **hydrostatic testing** of portable fire extinguishers;
- Mounting fire extinguishers on appropriate brackets;
- Replacing inoperable portable fire extinguishers upon discovery;
- Upon being notified, replacing portable fire extinguishers with appropriate types when **fire loads** and/or occupancies change;
- Performing the required monthly inspection on portable fire extinguishers;
- Retaining all records for portable fire extinguisher testing and inspection; and
- Making a report available for an EHS representative to review during the annual fire/general safety review.
- Replacing portable fire extinguishers with appropriate types when fire loads and/or occupancies change or upon being so instructed, e.g., after an annual fire/general safety review;
- Notifying the ABC Company Safety Coordinator in the event of a change in building fire loads or **occupancy**.

5.4. Licensed Contractors

Licensed contractors are responsible for:

- Performing annual maintenance and hydrostatic testing when scheduled by the appropriate group;
- Performing monthly maintenance when scheduled by the appropriate group; and
- Making a report available for the appropriate group when the annual inspection is complete.

5.5. Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for and may be asked to:

- Participate in the fire extinguisher hazard assessment, inspections and maintenance;
- Deliver fire extinguisher training;
- Participate in drills simulating different kinds of fire fighting emergencies involving fire extinguisher use;
- Review the drills records.

5.6. Safety Committee/Safety Representative

The Safety Committee or Safety Representative for the workplace, if any, will consult in the creation, implementation, and review of this Policy.

5.7. Workers

Workers are responsible for cooperating in the implementation of this Policy, including:

- Familiarizing themselves with and receiving the training they need to be prepared to carry out their fire extinguishing roles and responsibilities;
- Participating in emergency evacuation and other drills;
- Keeping emergency routes and exits clean and unobstructed;
- Ensuring that access paths to fire extinguishers and other equipment needed to respond to an emergency is kept unobstructed;
- Notifying their supervisor if fire extinguishers are missing, damaged or inoperable.

5.8. Visitors

Visitors to ABC Company workplaces are responsible for:

- Being familiar with the fire safety and evacuation plan for the work site

they visit;

- Cooperating with and refraining from engaging in any conduct that distracts or interferes with the implementation of the fire safety and evacuation plan in case an emergency arises; and
- Complying with the terms of the ABC Company Visitors' Safety Policy.

6. SELECTION OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

6.1. Classes of Fires

When selecting fire extinguishers, ABC Company personnel must be familiar with the classes of fires and the fire loading so that they select the appropriate type of extinguisher. The following descriptions of the classes of fires will help determine what type of extinguisher is needed to extinguish a specific type of fire:

- **Class A** fires involve ordinary combustibles such as paper, cloth, wood, rubber and some plastics;
- **Class B** fires involve flammable liquids such as gasoline, thinners, oil-based paints and greases;
- **Class C** fires involve energized electrical equipment such as computers, copy machines, television sets and video equipment;
- **Class D** fires involve combustible metals such as magnesium, titanium, zinc and potassium.

6.2. Classes of Fire Extinguishers

Different fire extinguishers are designed to extinguish different types of fires:

- **Class A Extinguishers** are designed for fires fueled by ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper textiles (e.g. pressurized water);
- **Class B Extinguishers** are designed for fires fueled by flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, grease, tar, paint (e.g. carbon dioxide);
- **Class C Extinguishers** are designed for fires in live electrical equipment (e.g. carbon dioxide);
- **Class D Extinguishers** are designed for fires fueled by combustible metals such as magnesium, potassium, powdered aluminum, zinc, sodium, titanium, zirconium and lithium (e.g. sand);
- **Class K Extinguishers** are designed for kitchen grease fires;

6.3. Fire Extinguishing Methods

Different classes of fire extinguishers use different modes of fire extinguishing and suppression:

- **Pressurized Water:** The pressurized water extinguisher is the most popular

type of extinguisher used for extinguishing Class A fires;

- **Carbon Dioxide:** The carbon dioxide fire extinguisher is primarily used in areas where the potential for Class B and Class C fire loads exist;
- **Multi-Purpose Dry Chemical:** The dry chemical fire extinguisher is used in areas where Class A, Class B or Class C hazards are encountered;
- **Extinguishing Agents for Combustible Metals:** There is no single extinguishing agent or powder that will control or suppress all combustible metal fires. The type of extinguishing agent in a particular area is based on the type of combustible metals being used.

6.4. Building Protection

Portable fire extinguishers that are provided to protect a building shall be suitable for fighting Class A fires and be available for use at all times.

6.5. Occupancy Protection

Portable fire extinguishers that are provided to protect a hazardous occupancy shall be those required in this Section for fighting Class A fires, Class B fires, Class C fires or Class D fires.

7. LABELS

All fire extinguishers must have a label affixed to the front of the extinguisher showing operating instructions and the extinguisher rating. A **pictogram** or **letter-shaped symbol** can be used for identifying the extinguisher's rating.

8. LOCATION OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

8.1. Accessibility

Portable fire extinguishers shall be located in or adjacent to corridors or aisles that provide access to exits in such a place that they will be easily seen and accessible at all times. Portable fire extinguishers in proximity to a fire hazard shall be located so as to be accessible without exposing the operator to undue risk.

8.2. Corrosive Atmosphere

Portable fire extinguishers that are subject to corrosion shall not be installed in a corrosive environment unless they are provided with appropriate corrosion protection.

9. MOUNTING OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

9.1. Installation/Mounting Method

All portable fire extinguishers must be installed on brackets or mounted in wall cabinets.

9.2. Distance Above Floor

Portable fire extinguishers with a gross weight greater than 18 kg shall be installed so that the top of the extinguisher is not more than 1.1 m above the floor when the extinguisher is not equipped with wheels. Portable fire extinguishers having a gross weight of 18 kg or less shall be installed so that the top of the extinguisher is not more than 1.5 m above the floor.

10. SIGNS

The location of portable fire extinguishers shall be prominently indicated by signs or markings in large floor areas and in locations where visual obstructions cannot be avoided.

11. INSPECTION & MAINTENANCE

11.1. Monthly Inspections

All portable fire extinguishers shall be inspected monthly. Departments are responsible for performing monthly inspection of the fire extinguishers in their work areas and zones of responsibility. Individuals carrying out the inspection must confirm that:

- The fire extinguisher is located in the proper place in close proximity to a potential hazard;

- The locking pin is intact and sealed;
- The pressure is within the correct range;
- There is no obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzle;
- The area around the fire extinguisher is clear of obstructions;
- The location of the fire extinguisher is conspicuous; and
- A signed tag is attached (as stipulated in Section 11.3. below).

11.2. Annual Maintenance

Maintenance on portable fire extinguishers will be conducted in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). All portable fire extinguishers shall undergo an annual maintenance check by a licensed contractor or internal personnel with appropriate fire safety licensing or certification. All maintenance and hydrostatic testing performed shall be in accordance with NFPA Chapter 10 'Portable Fire Extinguishers.' The scheduling of annual maintenance inspections is the responsibility of the ABC Company Safety Coordinator.

11.3. Tags

Each portable fire extinguisher shall have a tag securely attached to it showing the maintenance or recharge date, the servicing agency and the signature of the person who performed the service. Upon completing the monthly inspection, the appropriate department personnel shall date and initial the backside of the service tag. Inspections tags will be available from the ABC Company Safety Office if needed.

11.4. Replacement & Removal

Portable fire extinguishers shall be replaced and recharged after use in conformance with instructions given on the extinguisher nameplate. Reusable fire extinguishers must be recharged after every use or when the gauge indicates a condition less than fully charged. Extinguisher shells, cartridges or cylinders that show leakage or permanent distortion in excess of specified limits or that rupture shall be removed from service. If the extinguisher is obstructed, the appropriate department personnel shall contact the person whose materials are obstructing the extinguisher and have them remove the materials immediately, or make arrangements to relocate the extinguisher.

11.5. Maintenance Records

A permanent record containing the maintenance date, the examiner's name and a description of any maintenance work or hydrostatic testing carried out shall be prepared and maintained for each portable fire extinguisher.

11.6. Reporting of Problems

Any problems related to a portable fire extinguisher must be reported to the workplace supervisor.

12. TRAINING & INSTRUCTION

ABC Company will ensure that workers receive the training they need to operate fire extinguishers in an emergency. Workers with specific firefighting responsibilities will receive the technical training and instruction necessary to carry out those duties.

13. EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills will be held at least once a year to test each element of the ABC Company Emergency Response Plan, including:

- The Fire Safety Plan;
- The Emergency Incident Response Plan; and
- Rescue procedures.

Written records of the above drills will be kept.

14. EVALUATION

ABC Company will review this Policy and its Emergency Response Plan:

- At least once a year in consultation with the Safety Committee or Safety Representative for the workplace;
- After drills and actual emergencies, which may include review by the Safety Committee or Safety Representative.