



FACT SHEET

No. 40 – Safe Operation of Fire Extinguishers

Version 02

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FACT

Poor maintenance and incorrect usage of fire extinguishers in the home are two key reasons small house fires can spread endangering lives and causing considerable damage to property. House fires can be brought under control within the first few minutes of ignition if attended to correctly with an extinguisher that is well maintained, which can buy valuable time before the fire brigade arrives.

HOW TO OPERATE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

There are a number of different types of portable fire extinguishers, each identified by colour coding and labelling. Check that the extinguisher you intend to use is suitable for the type of fire encountered eg a water extinguisher must never be used on any fire involving electrical equipment.

There are four (4) basic steps for using modern portable fire extinguishers. The acronym PASS is used to describe these four basic steps.

1. **PULL** (pin): Pull pin at the top of the extinguisher, breaking the seal. When in place, the pin keeps the handle from being pressed and accidentally operating the extinguisher. Immediately test the extinguisher. (Aiming away from the operator) This is to ensure the extinguisher works and also shows the operator how far the stream travels.
2. **AIM**: Approach the fire standing at a safe distance. Aim the nozzle or outlet towards the base of the fire.
3. **SQUEEZE**: Squeeze the handles together to discharge the extinguishing agent inside. Release the handles to stop.
4. **SWEEP**: Sweep the nozzle from side to side as you approach the fire, directing the extinguishing agent at the base of the flames. After an A Class fire is extinguished, probe for smouldering hot spots that could reignite the fuel.

Always test the extinguisher before proceeding to the fire. Remember that you only have seconds to extinguish the fire, not minutes, but only do so if it is safe and you are trained to. The rule of thumb is if you can not put a fire out with one extinguisher then the fire is too big to fight.

EXTINGUISHER TIPS

- Australian Standard 2444 (AS 2444) Portable Fire Extinguishers and Fire Blankets provides comprehensive information on selection and location.
- Ensure everyone in the home/office knows the location of all extinguishers and how to use them.
- Only ever operate an extinguisher if safe to do so. If in doubt, get out.
- Remove the safety pin by pulling it sharply (this also breaks the plastic seal). Test to ensure that the extinguisher is operable immediately after removing from mounting bracket.
- Always try to work in pairs for safety.
- Carry or drag extinguisher to the scene of the fire.



For more information contact your local fire station or visit:
www.fire.nsw.gov.au or www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or www.esa.act.gov.au

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000)

PREVENT PREPARE PROTECT

