

TOOLBOX TALK: FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Without turning around, point at the nearest fire extinguisher. Anybody who has to look for it has just told us how this talk is going to go.

The talk

There is a distance rule and most sites break it. From any point in the protected area, the walk to the nearest extinguisher cannot be more than a hundred feet.

There is a coverage rule too. At least one extinguisher rated 2A for every three thousand square feet of protected building area, and at least one on every floor, with one next to the stairway in a multistory building.

Where you are using more than five gallons of flammable liquid or five pounds of flammable gas, there has to be an extinguisher rated at least 10B within fifty feet of it. That is the gas cans and the propane, not the building.

Learn the word PASS and you have the whole technique. Pull the pin, aim at the base of the fire, squeeze the handle, sweep side to side. Aiming at the flames does nothing, because the flames are not what is burning.

The harder part is knowing when not to. If the fire is bigger than you are, if it is between you and the way out, if it is spreading faster than you are working, or if you are on your own, you leave. You do not get a second decision.

An extinguisher that has been used is empty even if it still feels heavy, and it does not go back on the hook. Firefighting equipment gets inspected and kept working, and anything defective is replaced immediately, not at the end of the job.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The nearest extinguisher. Walk to it and count the steps.
- The gauge on it, and whether the needle is in the green.
- The pin and the seal, and whether either has been disturbed.
- The fuel cans and propane on this site, and the extinguisher within fifty feet of them.
- The way out of this floor, and whether an extinguisher sits between you and it.

- The stairway, and the extinguisher that is supposed to be next to it.

The rules that apply

- An extinguisher rated at least 2A for every 3,000 square feet of protected building area, or major fraction of it.
- The travel distance from any point in the protected area to the nearest extinguisher cannot exceed 100 feet.
- One or more extinguishers rated at least 2A on every floor, and in a multistory building at least one located next to the stairway.
- An extinguisher rated at least 10B within 50 feet of anywhere more than 5 gallons of flammable or combustible liquid, or 5 pounds of flammable gas, is in use. Vehicle fuel tanks do not count.
- All firefighting equipment is inspected periodically and kept in operating condition, and defective equipment is replaced immediately.
- Carbon tetrachloride and other toxic vaporizing liquid extinguishers are prohibited on the site.

Ask the crew

- How many steps to the nearest extinguisher from where you work today?
- What does PASS stand for?
- Name one situation today where you would walk away instead of fighting it.

Close with this

Ten seconds of extinguisher, or a whole building. Decide which one you are dealing with before you pick it up.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

	Print name and signature
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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.