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GUIDELINES FOR HOME FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

A fire extinguisher can be a lifesaver. Placed near an exit, in an easy-to-grab spot, it can put out a small fire before the firefighters arrive, or at least suppress the flames while you escape. It cannot be stressed enough, DIAL "911" to notify the Fire Department, even if "you think" you put the fire out!!!

The "ABCs" of Fire Extinguishers

For the purpose of residential types of fire, consider that fires as classified as:

- Class "A": Ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood and fabric.
- Class "B": Flammable liquids such as gasoline or alcohol
- Class "C": Energized electrical equipment

For the home, select a multi-purpose "dry chemical" extinguisher (can be used on Classes "A", "B" and "C" fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle. Typically, a two and one half pound or a five pound multi-purpose fire extinguisher is most appropriate for the home. The weight refers to the amount of extinguishing agent (dry chemical) in the extinguisher cylinder. The two and one half pound is a quick grab for a small fire on the stovetop or oven. The five pound is a good option for the basement, garage, shed or workshop.

- Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory.
- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out. Local fire departments or fire equipment distributors often offer fire extinguisher training.
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.

To operate a fire extinguisher use a standoff distance of approximately 6 feet, and remember the word PASS:

- **P**ull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
- **A**im low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly.
- **S**weep the nozzle from side-to-side.

*Once the fire extinguisher is used, even if it feels like it is still full, **have it refilled or replaced ASAP** as eventually the pressure necessary for the extinguisher to operate will leak out.*

Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household **MUST** have a home fire escape plan (which is practiced) and working smoke alarms (which are tested at least once a month). And remember, DIAL "911" even if you think the fire is out.