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Fire extinguishers

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority for residents is to get out safely.

Safety tips:

- Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.
- To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:
 - Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
 - Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
 - Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side.
- For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.
- 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 hands-on fire extinguisher trainings.
- 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.
- Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a [home fire escape plan](#) and working [smoke alarms](#).

NFPA does not test, label or approve any products.
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Fire In Your Home Booklet

The fire safety guide every family needs...now in a larger size that's easier to use!

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NFPA 10: Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers, 2002 Edition

Get the latest on extinguishers--in one handy source! *NFPA 10* standard covers criteria for every aspect of portable fire extinguisher use.

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