



PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

The proper use of portable fire extinguishers can extinguish many fires while they are still small. You should be aware, however, that the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) should be notified without delay as soon as any fire is discovered.

The FDNY regulates the number, type, and placement of the portable fire extinguishers that are required for any building. These portable fire extinguishers are an important part of an overall fire safety program. It is important to keep in mind that the successful use of portable fire extinguishers depends on the following:

- the portable fire extinguishers are properly located and in working order.
- the portable fire extinguishers are of the correct type.
- the fire is discovered while still small enough for use of the portable fire extinguishers to be effective.
- the fire is discovered by persons who are ready, willing, and able to use the portable fire extinguishers.

Also, you should know that portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. They contain a limited amount of extinguishing material and need to be used properly so that this material is not wasted.

In some cases, OSHA may require that an employer provide education to its employees on how to use the portable fire extinguishers that are located in the workplace. Generally, operation instructions are provided on the side of the fire extinguisher. They clearly describe how to use the extinguisher in case of an emergency. An example of these instructions is shown below.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What companies can I use to service my portable fire extinguishers?

A. You should only use companies that have been issued a certificate by the New York City Fire Department (FDNY). This certificate is called a “portable fire extinguisher servicing company” certificate. (Note: All companies servicing fire extinguishers in NYC must be certified by the FDNY). You may wish to shop around by calling different companies. You can view the list of certified companies by clicking on:

http://nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/fire_prevention/fire_ext_app_rpt_1.pdf

Q. How would I know if an individual person is authorized to service my portable fire extinguishers?

A. To be authorized, the individual must be certified by the FDNY – he/she will have been issued a Certificate of Fitness for portable fire extinguisher servicing. Upon your request, the individual should be able to show you the plastic photo ID card that the FDNY issued him/her as proof of being certified. The photo ID card provides much information. Under “CAT.” (category) it says “W62”; under “DESCRIPTION” it says “CITIWIDE SERV PORT FIRE EXTING”.

Q. Does the Fire Department (FDNY) regulate the companies or individuals that sell new portable fire extinguishers?

A. No. The FDNY does not regulate individuals or companies selling new portable fire extinguishers.

Q. Where can I purchase new portable fire extinguishers?

A. You can purchase them at a wide variety of retail stores, including most hardware stores.

Another option would be to purchase them from a company engaged in the business of servicing portable fire extinguishers. These servicing companies are certified by the FDNY. (Note: All companies servicing fire extinguishers in NYC must be certified by the FDNY).

You may wish to shop around by calling different companies. You can view the list of certified companies by clicking on:

http://nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/fire_prevention/fire_ext_app_rpt_1.pdf

Q. How do I know what type and how many portable fire extinguishers my building must have?

A. The rule that covers this is Section 15-02 of Title 3 of the Rules of the City of New York (3RCNY §15-02), entitled “Portable Fire Extinguishers” and NFPA 10. This rule also covers the requirements for the inspection, maintenance, recharging and hydrostatic testing of portable fire extinguishers. If you wish to view a complete copy of rule 3RCNY §15-02, click on:

http://nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/rcny/rcny_1502_repeal.pdf

A copy of NFPA 10 can be purchased from the National Fire Protection Association – telephone # (800) 344-3555.

1st example: A retail store needs **one** portable fire extinguisher (of minimum **2-A** rating) for every **2,500** square feet of floor area or fraction thereof (for each floor).

2nd example: A restaurant kitchen needs **one** portable fire extinguisher suitable for a **Class K** fire, with a maximum travel distance of thirty (30) feet. (This is in addition to any fixed fire extinguishing system(s) required to protect individual cooking appliances in the kitchen). The public assembly space in the restaurant needs **one** portable fire extinguisher (of minimum **2-A** rating) for every **2,500** square feet of floor area or fraction thereof (for each floor).

Q. My business was visited by a representative from a portable fire extinguisher servicing company. He did not have an appointment and just showed up. He said that the FDNY had sent him. He used high-pressure tactics to try and persuade me to buy more portable fire extinguishers for my store than the law requires. How can I file a complaint?

A. - If the representative was from a servicing company that is certified by the FDNY, you can file a complaint with the FDNY by calling (718) 999-2533 during business hours, or by clicking on:

http://nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/fire_prevention/instruct_complaint_form.pdf

- If the representative was from a servicing company that is not certified by the FDNY, you can contact the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs by calling (212) 487-4444 for your rights.

Note: Be aware that the FDNY does not send private companies (such as portable fire extinguisher servicing companies) to conduct official FDNY inspections.

Q. My business was visited by a representative from a portable fire extinguisher servicing company. He was wearing a cap and a T-shirt that both had the FDNY logo on them. Is he allowed to dress like that while conducting business for a private company? Doesn't that give off the wrong impression?

A. A representative of a private company engaged in the servicing of fire safety equipment (such as a portable fire extinguisher servicing company) is prohibited from wearing FDNY clothing and logos.



Q. What should I look for when purchasing new portable fire extinguishers?

A. You should keep the following in mind:

- All fire extinguishers should be "listed" and "labeled" by an independent testing laboratory such as FM (Factory Mutual) or UL (Underwriters Laboratories). The identification mark of the listing and labeling company should be on each fire extinguisher.
- The selection of portable fire extinguishers should be based on the character of the fires anticipated. Using the wrong type of fire extinguisher on the fire could be dangerous and make matters worse. In addition, the fire extinguisher being selected should be of sufficient capacity and quantity to meet the code/rule requirements. Make sure you can handle and operate the fire extinguisher you are purchasing.
- Remember that fire extinguishers need care and must be recharged after every use. Ask how it should be serviced and inspected.
- All new extinguishers must be fully charged and in an operable condition. For a stored-pressure type such as dry chemical fire extinguisher, this may be confirmed by checking that the pressure gauge is in the operable range



(commonly known as green zone).

For a non-stored-pressure type such as carbon dioxide, this can be done by weighing.

Q. Are all portable fire extinguishers the same?

A. Definitely not. The type of portable fire extinguisher that you will use depends on what it is that is burning. Portable fire extinguishers are listed and labeled according to the type of fire (class of fire) they are intended for. Letters, "A", "B", "C", "D" and "K" are used. There is a rating number preceding letters "A" and "B". The rating number indicates the relative extinguishing effectiveness. The higher the rating number, the higher the capacity (more extinguishing agent). There is no rating number preceding letters "C", "D" and "K". Some fire extinguishers have more than one letter classification, such as **2-A:20-B:C**. This classification means that this portable fire extinguisher:

1. could extinguish approximately **twice as much Class A** fires as a 1-A rated fire extinguisher.
2. could extinguish approximately **20 times as much Class B** fires as a 1-B rated fire extinguisher.
3. **is suitable for use on Class C** fires (energized electrical equipment).

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- A fire extinguisher labeled with letter "A" is for use on **Class A fires**. Class A fires are fires that involve ordinary combustible materials such as cloth, wood, paper, rubber, and many plastics.
- A fire extinguisher labeled with letter "B" is for use on **Class B fires**. Class B fires are fires that involve flammable and combustible liquids such as gasoline, alcohol, diesel oil, oil-based paints, lacquers, etc., and flammable gases.
- A fire extinguisher labeled with letter "C" is for use on **Class C fires**. Class C fires are fires that involve energized electrical equipment.
- A fire extinguisher labeled with letter "D" is for use on **Class D fires**. Class D fires are fires that involve combustible metals such as magnesium, titanium and sodium.
- A fire extinguisher labeled with letter "K" is for use on **Class K fires**. Class K fires are fires that involve vegetable oils, animal oils, or fats in cooking appliances. This is for commercial kitchens, including those found in restaurants, cafeterias, and caterers.

Q. I have a number of portable fire extinguishers in my building. Can I inspect them myself?

A. Yes and no. You can perform the monthly “quick-check” inspections yourself, but a portable fire extinguisher servicing company (certified by the FDNY) must come in at least once a year and perform any maintenance, recharging, and/or testing that is required by 3RCNY §15-02 and NFPA 10.

Q. What is a "quick check" inspection of a portable fire extinguisher?

A. It is intended to give reasonable assurance that the fire extinguisher is fully charged and operable. This quick check is done by verifying that the portable fire extinguisher is in its designated place, that it has not been used or tampered with, and that there is no visible physical damage or condition to prevent its operation.

Q. What does “maintenance” of portable fire extinguishers involve?

A. Maintenance is a thorough examination of the fire extinguisher. It is intended to give maximum assurance that a portable fire extinguisher will operate effectively and safely. It includes a detailed examination, including any necessary repair or replacement. Maintenance will normally reveal if hydrostatic testing or internal maintenance is required. Maintenance and recharging are considered "servicing". Recharging is the replacement of the extinguishing agent. It may also include the replacement of the pressurizing gas (expellant gas) for certain types of fire extinguishers. A FDNY Certificate of Fitness is required to service (maintain and/or recharge) a portable fire extinguisher.
