

The Right Way to Use a Portable Fire Extinguisher-Part 2

In part one, we discussed the first steps in using a portable fire extinguisher. We reviewed **Use Your Judgment, Communicate**, and part of **Ready the Extinguisher**. The next steps to **Ready the Extinguisher** are these:

Ready the Extinguisher --

- Quickly but carefully remove the extinguisher from its mounting bracket. It may be heavy, so use caution when lifting it.
- Stand about six feet from the fire.
- Extend the nozzle toward the fire.

Use It --Once the extinguisher is ready, you are ready to release the extinguishing agent. This must be done properly. For example, if you squeeze the handle before you have aimed the nozzle properly, valuable time and extinguishing agent will be wasted.

A technique to remember for using an extinguisher is published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). It is known as the **P.A.S.S. Technique**.

The P.A.S.S. Technique:

- **Pull** out the pin that secures the handle.
- **Aim** the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire.
- **Squeeze** the handle. (Do not be startled by the noise or velocity of the agent as it is released.)
- **Sweep** the agent stream from side to side across the base of the fire until it is completely out. Be alert for re-ignition. If this happens, douse the fire until the extinguisher is empty.

Once the fire is out, back carefully away from the scene. This will enable you to know immediately if the fire re-ignites.

Knowing how to use a fire extinguisher the right way is an important skill. Sometimes, though, in spite of your best efforts, your attempt may fail. The last point to remember about using a fire extinguisher is what to do if your efforts fail. It is really quite simple. If you cannot extinguish the blaze or it recurs repeatedly, **evacuate the area immediately**.

The best time to familiarize yourself with potential fire hazards in your work area is before a fire happens. Knowing the hazards that exist, and what types of fires could occur are critical skills to working safely. You can also use this knowledge to make sure the proper type of fire extinguisher is available should the need arise. This should all be part of your company's comprehensive safety program.