

Fire Extinguisher Facts

Periodically One of the most crucial but often overlooked pieces of equipment in your church building is the fire extinguisher. Hopefully this equipment is rarely used, but it is necessary. Although most jurisdictions have regular fire marshal visits wherein the marshal checks these units, those occur usually yearly at best and may be non-existent if your church lies in an unincorporated zone of the county.

Every congregation should institute a regular review of its equipment to be sure fire extinguishers are present, charged, problem free and ready for use when needed. Try to schedule inspections monthly if possible; quarterly at a maximum interval. Do not rely simply on the annual fire marshal inspection since an inspection is an easy task to perform. All extinguishers have dials near the spray nozzle that register if the tank is fully charged or needs replacing or recharging. Check all units regularly and replace uncharged units immediately. Your inspection routine should include:

- Making sure extinguishers are in their right location.
- Access to them is not blocked.
- Mount is secure or cabinet doors are in functioning order (open and close or remove and reset extinguisher on bracket each inspection).
- Pressure gauges show adequate charge and pressure.
- Safety pin and seals are in place and handle appears functional and pin can be removed easily when necessary.
- Fire extinguisher shows no visual signs of damage or abuse, handle mechanism is not bent.
- Nozzles are free of blockage.

Fire extinguishers bear labels so you can tell you have the right type of extinguisher to fight the expected fire source in the zone of coverage.

- **Class A units** are for ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, textiles, and some plastics. These are usually water or dry chemical based units. These units bear a triangle with an A in it.
- **Class B units** are for flammable liquid and gas fires such as oil and gasoline. Their agent deprives the fire of oxygen and units bear a square with letter B in it.
- **Class C units** are for fires involving live electrical equipment. These units can be identified by a circle with a C in it.
- **Class D extinguishers** are used on combustible metals like sodium and magnesium. (Rare for churches). They are identified by a five-point star with "D" in it.

- **Class K units** fight fires involving cooking media (fats, grease, oils). Have one of these along with an ABC-rated unit in your kitchen area.
- **Most units are capable of multiple types of fire control** and may be rated something like 4A:20B:C, which means the unit can fight Class A fires with the equivalent of five gallons of water (4A means four 1.25-gallon equivalents). The 20B:C means it can contain a 20-square-foot area of type B fires and additionally fight fires in electrically energized equipment (C rated). Once power is off, an A or B unit can be used to control the fire.

Portable fire extinguishers are needed even if your facility is fully fire sprinkled so check you have adequate extinguishers posted. As a general rule, you should be able to walk no more than 75 feet from any location in your facility and find an extinguisher. They should be conspicuously located and installed on brackets or in cabinets at an accessible height.

A good rule of thumb is no more than 3.5 feet to the top of the extinguisher off the floor. Check with your local fire marshal as they may have particular requirements.

Fire extinguishers, correctly inspected and placed for the expected type of fire can have a large role in stopping major fire damage and minimizing reconstruction costs. ...Unfortunately, they have little effect on the fires of hell....for that Christ recommends His abundant grace for the repentant heart seeking forgiveness in prayer.

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.

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