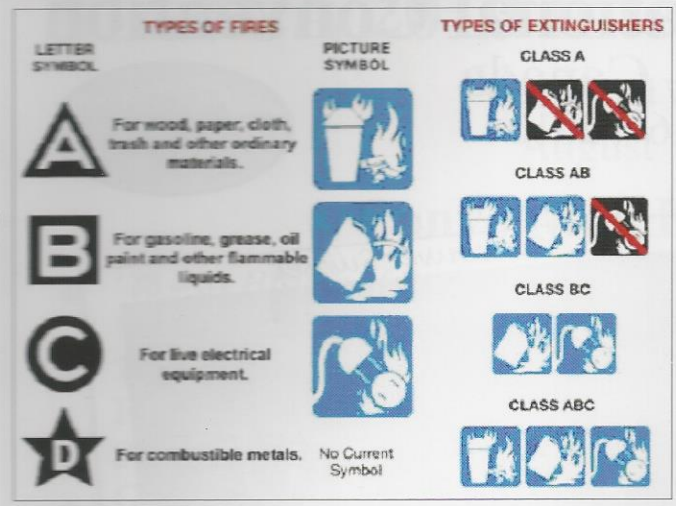


Figure 2 shows some of the common labeling of a fire extinguisher.

It is also important to understand how to use a fire extinguisher. Use this acronym to as a quick reference:

P A S S

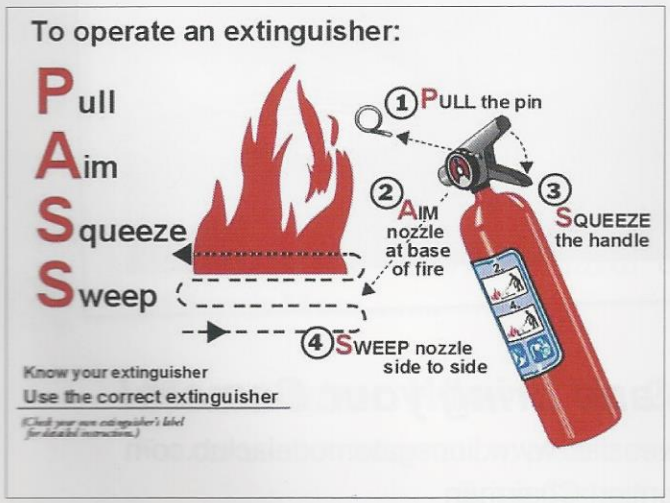
Pull the Pin at the top of the extinguisher. The pin releases a locking mechanism and will allow you to discharge the extinguisher.

Aim at the base of the fire, not the flames. This is important - in order to put out the fire, you must extinguish the fuel.

Squeeze the lever slowly. This will release the extinguishing agent in the extinguisher. If the handle is released, the discharge will stop.

Sweep from side to side. Using a sweeping motion, move the fire extinguisher back and forth until the fire is completely out. Operate the extinguisher from a safe distance, several feet away, and then move towards the fire once it starts to diminish. Be sure to read the instructions on your fire extinguisher — different fire extinguishers recommend operating them from different distances. Remember: Aim at the base of the fire, not at the flames!!!!

Figure 3 helps illustrate this:



Just as important as "how" to use a fire extinguisher is "when" to use one. Fires have several stages. We're concerned with the first three stages; incipient, growth and free burning.

- An **incipient** fire flames may be visible, but it's not very large yet.
- In the **growth** phase, flames can be seen and the fire is starting to spread.
- In the **free burning** stage a fire will double itself every second if enough fuel is available.

So when do you use a fire extinguisher to fight a fire? First, never use a fire extinguisher to fight a fire if you the slightest doubt about your safety. If you do have the slightest concern about your safety call for help, warn others in the vicinity and evacuate the area. Only attempt to fight a fire:

- **If it is small and contained.** The time to use a fire extinguisher is in the early or incipient stage. Once the fire starts to grow or spread it's time to evacuate the area.
- **If you are safe from the toxic smoke.** If the fire is producing large amounts of thick black smoke or chemical smoke, do not try to extinguish the fire, especially if indoors. If outdoors, approach the fire with the wind at your back. All fires produce toxic gases that can be fatal.
- **If you have a means of escape.** You should only fight a fire when you have a means of escape at your back. If the fire is not extinguished quickly you need to be able to get out quickly and avoid becoming trapped.
- **If your instincts tell you it's OK.** If you don't feel comfortable fighting the fire, don't try. Get out and let the fire department do their job.



Never attempt to fight a fire that is in the growth phase and spreading beyond the region of ignition. If it's crawling out of the engine compartment, run away!