



eSafetyLine

Where is Best?

Fire Extinguishers

The main reasons for having fire extinguishers readily available are to:

- Suppress a fire along an escape route so trapped persons can exit a burning structure.
- To extinguish or contain a fire from the time it is discovered until the arrival of fire department personnel.

This makes sense, but where would the best location be to place fire extinguishers at a jobsite. The obvious answer is to place them in locations that are most susceptible to a fire. In your home this would be very straightforward- the kitchen, the basement and the garage. At the worksite this is a bit more complicated because the likelihood of a fire occurring in a particular spot is more difficult to determine. To avoid putting workers in danger, fire extinguishers should be located throughout the workplace and readily accessible in the event of a fire. You can usually find them in hallways, meeting rooms, kitchens, mechanical/electrical rooms, and near exit doors. Portable fire extinguishers must be selected and positioned based on the potential type and size of fire that can occur.

OSHA's requirement for placement deals with the travel distance to the nearest fire extinguisher. This distance varies depending on the type of fire involved. For Class A fires which involve "normal" combustibles like wood, cloth and paper, the travel distance should be 75 feet or less. This means an employee must not have to travel more than 75 feet to reach a portable fire extinguisher. Class B fires involve flammable liquids like grease, gasoline, and oil.

Employers must distribute portable fire extinguishers for use on Class B fires so that the travel distance for employees to any extinguisher is 50 feet or less. Class C fires are electrical fires and are typically electrically energized. Portable fire extinguishers for use on Class C hazards should be distributed on the appropriate pattern for the existing Class A or Class B hazards present at that site.

Class D fires involve flammable metals and the agents to put out these fires are specific to the type of metal in question. Portable fire extinguishers or other containers of Class D extinguishing agent for employee use should be distributed so that employee travel distance from the combustible metal working area to any extinguisher is 75 feet or less. Portable fire extinguishers for Class D hazards are required in areas where combustible metal powders, flakes, shavings, or similarly sized products are generated at least once every two weeks. In a multi-purpose extinguisher the travel distance should be the lowest of the travel distances covered by the extinguisher.

In more general terms, OSHA also states that at least one portable fire extinguisher be placed on each floor. In a multistory building at least one extinguisher must be located next to each stairway.

Discussion Questions

What is meant by travel distance?

For a multi-purpose extinguisher, how is travel distance determined?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date