

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

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FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: SIX MISTAKES NOT TO MAKE

Promote fire extinguisher safety in your workplace. Below are the six most common mistakes employers make regarding fire extinguishers:

1. YOU DIDN'T TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES

Cal OSHA requires **ANY** employee who will use a fire extinguisher to be trained annually. **Make sure all your employees receive training and have some experience pulling the trigger on the device.**



**Train your employees at least annually.
Train in-house or call NBSIA for on-site training.**

2. YOU USED THE WRONG FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Not all fire extinguishers put out all fires. This is especially true when dealing with kitchen fires that have oils and fats as their fuel source. The proper extinguisher for a kitchen is K-rated, not an ABC. **Learn the differences and make sure the right extinguishers are in the right areas.**

3. THEY WEREN'T INSPECTED MONTHLY

Inspections help identify problems and deficiencies. You don't want your employee reaching for a faulty

extinguisher in the face of a fire. Make sure your extinguishers are ready to fight when you are. **Inspect them monthly.**

4. YOU DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH OF THEM

At any given time, a fire extinguisher needs to be within a 75-foot distance from any employee. Time is precious in a fire, and not having enough fire extinguishers may result in fighting a bigger fire than you need to. **Make sure you have extinguishers properly placed and in the right quantity.**

Most importantly: make sure your employees know where the fire extinguishers are located.

5. YOU INSTALLED THEM TOO HIGH

The ADA or American's with Disability Act requires that items be in reach of wheelchair users—fire extinguishers are no exception. **Fire extinguishers must not be mounted higher than 48 inches from the floor.**

6. THEY ARE TOO OLD

The State Fire Marshall passed regulations making 1984 or older fire extinguishers obsolete. **Ensure that your extinguishers are not outdated.**

The California Labor Code, Cal/OSHA, and Federal regulations require employers to provide all employees yearly training in the use of portable fire extinguishers. OSHA Title 8, paragraph G reads: "Where the employer has provided fire extinguishers for employee use in the work place, the employer shall also provide an educational program to familiarize employees with the general principals of fire extinguisher use and the hazards involved with incipient state fire fighting."

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Keep a copy of this bulletin in your Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) binder and be sure employees receive a copy.