Fire extinguisher toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.150, 1910.157, 1910.155

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If a fire started next to you right now, could you reach the nearest extinguisher without looking for it, and would you know how to use it?

Why it matters

A fire extinguisher can stop a small fire before it spreads, but only if it is close by, charged and the right type for the fire. Fires grow fast, and smoke can fill a room before you know it. Knowing when to fight a fire and when to get out matters as much as knowing how to pull the pin.

Key points

1. **Know where the nearest one is**
   Before you start work, find the closest extinguisher and the closest way out. On construction sites, access to all firefighting equipment must be kept open at all times. Never stack material, park a cart or hang gear in front of an extinguisher, even for a few minutes.
   29 CFR 1926.150(a)(2)

2. **Match the extinguisher to the fire**
   In general industry, extinguishers must be chosen for the kinds of fires the workplace can expect. The label tells you the class: A for wood, paper and cloth, B for flammable liquids, gases and grease, C for live electrical equipment and D for burning metals. An extinguisher marked ABC works on the first three, and water should never go on a fuel, grease or electrical fire.
   29 CFR 1910.157(d)(1)

3. **Fight only a small, new fire**
   An extinguisher is for a fire in its beginning stage, the kind you can put out with a portable extinguisher without protective clothing or breathing gear. Before you fight it, make sure others have been alerted and someone has called the fire department, the fire is small and not spreading, smoke is not filling the area and your way out is behind you. If any of these is not true, or you are not sure you can handle it, get out and close the door behind you.
   29 CFR 1910.155(c)(26)

4. **Use the PASS method**
   Remember PASS: pull the pin, aim the nozzle at the base of the fire, squeeze the handle and sweep from side to side. Start a few steps back and move in as the fire gets smaller. Once it is out, back away while you keep watching it, because it can flare up again.

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5 **Check it before you count on it**

In general industry, portable extinguishers must be visually inspected monthly. When you walk past one, check that it is in its spot and not blocked, the pin and seal are in place, the gauge needle is in the green if it has a gauge, and the hose and body are not damaged. If anything looks wrong, report it right away so it can be replaced.

29 CFR 1910.157(e)(2)

6 **Training is part of the rule**

In general industry, where your employer provides extinguishers for employees to use, it must give you education on the general principles of using them and the hazards of fighting a fire in its beginning stage. Workers named in an emergency action plan to use firefighting equipment must also be trained on that equipment (29 CFR 1910.157(g)(3)). Ask for a hands-on demonstration with the extinguishers on this site.

29 CFR 1910.157(g)(1)

Scenario

Picture this: Late in the shift, a spark from a grinder lands near a gas can that has been leaking, and flames start to spread across the floor. The extinguisher by the door is behind a stack of drywall, and when someone finally drags it out, the gauge reads empty. A coworker runs over with a bucket of water while smoke builds up near the only exit. What should each person have done, and what should have been checked before today?

Crew discussion

1. Where are the two closest extinguishers to where you are working today, and what classes are they rated for?
2. What kinds of fires could start in our work area, and do our extinguishers match them?
3. Who checks our extinguishers, and what do you do if you find one that is empty, damaged or blocked?
4. What would make you decide not to fight a fire and just get out?

Bottom line **Know where the nearest extinguisher is, keep it clear and charged, and only fight a small fire with your way out behind you.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Fire extinguishers / Extintores

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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