

“For Safety’s Sake - Do Something”

FIRE EXTINGUISHER ACCESSIBILITY



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, laundry rooms, meeting rooms, kitchens, mechanical or electrical rooms, near exit doors, and elevators. The portable fire extinguishers must be selected and positioned based on the potential type (and size) of fire that can occur.

The distance between fire extinguishers in the work place depends on the type of materials at risk of igniting. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has very detailed requirements about location and placement of fire extinguishers, based on the type of building area, and type of combustible materials stored. Basically, if your building (or work area) has:

- *Class A* combustible materials (paper, wood, plastic, etc.) – Have a 2-A extinguisher for every 3,000 square feet, and locate it no further than 100 feet away.
- *Class B* combustible materials (paints, oils, gasoline, etc.) – All employees need access to an extinguisher within 50 feet travel distance.
- *Class C* extinguishers (a multi-purpose extinguisher) – Are required where electrical equipment is used, and the size and location spacing is based on the Class A or B hazard that is present.
- *Class D* combustibles (metal powders, flakes, shavings, or similarly sized materials) – Must have a portable fire extinguisher not more than 75 feet from the hazard.
- *Class K* combustibles (cooking materials; vegetable/animal oils and fats) – Must have extinguishers installed at a maximum travel distance of 30 feet.

On construction sites, OSHA requires one or more fire extinguishers (rated not less than 2A) be provided on each floor. At least one fire extinguisher is to be located adjacent to the stairway. A fire extinguisher (rated not less than 10B) is to be provided within 50 feet of where 5+ gallons of flammable or combustible liquids or gases are being used. Other common locations would be storage boxes or trailers, gang boxes, mobile equipment like aerial lifts and forklifts as well as roof tops during roofing work.

Both Industry and Construction regulations require that an extinguisher be readily available to all hot work operations such as welding, cutting, soldering, brazing, and electrical hot work operations. The extinguisher should be within arms reach, as fire doubles in size very quickly. Roofing tar kettles require a fire extinguisher to be present, and also where propane torches are in use. Electrical work where plastic conduit or pipe is being formed or bent should also have a fire extinguisher present as a best practice due to the high heat possible.

To learn more, visit these websites, and
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Portable Fire Extinguishers:
<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable.html>

OSHA Training FAQ about Portable Fire Extinguishers:
<http://www.oshatraining.com/fire-extinguisher-signs-inspections-mounting.php>

Fire Prevention and Control on Construction Sites
<http://www.nsc.org/Membership%20Site%20Document%20Library/491.pdf>