

Portable Fire Extinguishers

Description:

The requirements of this OSHA standard apply to the placement, use, maintenance, and testing of portable fire extinguishers provided for the use of employees.

Regulatory Reference

29 CFR § 1910.157 Portable fire extinguishers.

Applies to:

The standard applies to portable fire extinguishers located inside buildings and workspaces. Paragraph (d) of 29 CFR § 1910.157 does not apply to extinguishers provided for employee use on the outside of workplace buildings or structures. Where extinguishers are provided but are not intended for employee use and the employer has an emergency action plan and a fire prevention plan which meet the requirements of §1910.38, then only the requirements of paragraphs (e) and (f) of 29 CFR § 1910.157 apply. Where the employer has an emergency action plan meeting the requirements of §1910.38 which designates certain employees to be the only employees authorized to use the available portable fire extinguishers, and which requires all other employees in the fire area to immediately evacuate the affected work area upon the sounding of the fire alarm, the employer is exempt from the distribution requirements in paragraph (d) of 29 CFR § 1910.157.

General Requirements:

- (1) The employer shall provide portable fire extinguishers and shall mount, locate and identify them so that they are readily accessible to employees without subjecting the employees to possible injury. Only approved portable fire extinguishers shall be used to meet the requirements of this standard. The employer shall not provide or make available in the workplace portable fire extinguishers using carbon tetrachloride or chlorobromomethane extinguishing agents.
- (2) The employer shall assure that portable fire extinguishers are maintained in a fully charged and operable condition and kept in their designated places at all times except during use.
- (3) Portable fire extinguishers shall be provided for employee use and selected and distributed based on the classes of anticipated workplace fires and on the size and degree of hazard which would affect their use.
- (4) The employer shall distribute portable fire extinguishers for use by employees on Class A fires so that the travel distance for employees to any extinguisher is 75 feet (22.9 m) or less. The employer may use uniformly spaced standpipe systems or hose stations connected to a sprinkler system installed for emergency use by employees instead of Class A portable fire extinguishers, provided that such systems meet the respective requirements of §1910.158 or §1910.159, that they provide total coverage of the area to be protected, and that employees are trained at least annually in their use.
- (5) The employer shall distribute portable fire extinguishers for use by employees on Class B fires so that the travel distance from the Class B hazard area to any extinguisher is 50 feet (15.2 m) or less. The employer shall distribute portable fire extinguishers used for Class C

hazards on the basis of the appropriate pattern for the existing Class A or Class B hazards. The employer shall distribute portable fire extinguishers or other containers of Class D extinguishing agent for use by employees so that the travel distance from the combustible metal working area to any extinguishing agent is 75 feet (22.9 m) or less. Portable fire extinguishers for Class D hazards are required in those combustible metal working areas where combustible metal powders, flakes, shavings, or similarly sized products are generated at least once every two weeks.

- (6) The employer shall be responsible for the inspection, maintenance and testing of all portable fire extinguishers in the workplace. Portable extinguishers or hose used in lieu thereof under paragraph (d)(3) of the regulation shall be visually inspected monthly.
- (7) The employer shall assure that portable fire extinguishers are subjected to an annual maintenance check. Stored pressure extinguishers do not require an internal examination. The employer shall record the annual maintenance date, and retain this record for one year after the last entry or the life of the shell, whichever is less. The record shall be available to the OSHA representatives upon request. The employer shall assure that stored pressure dry chemical extinguishers that require a 12-year hydrostatic test are emptied and subjected to applicable maintenance procedures every 6 years. The employer shall assure that hydrostatic testing is performed by trained persons with suitable testing equipment and facilities. Dry chemical extinguishers having non-refillable disposable containers are exempt from this requirement. When recharging or hydrostatic testing is performed, the 6-year requirement begins from that date.
- (8) The employer shall assure that alternate equivalent protection is provided when portable fire extinguishers are removed from service for maintenance and recharging.

Training Requirements:

- (1) Where the employer has provided portable fire extinguishers for employee use in the workplace, the employer shall also provide an educational program to familiarize employees with the general principles of fire extinguisher use and the hazards involved with incipient stage (a fire that is "just beginning") fire fighting.
- (2) The employer shall provide the education required upon initial employment of new employees and at least annually for existing employees thereafter.
- (3) The employer shall provide employees who have been designated to use fire fighting equipment as part of an emergency action plan with training in the use of the appropriate equipment upon initial assignment to the designated group of employees and at least annually thereafter.

Maintenance and Review

Many companies use monthly facilities inspections to check on fire extinguisher placement and inspections. It is a good practice to maintain fire extinguisher location charts and inspection and testing record files and to review them periodically as well.

Documentation of employee training should be periodically reviewed. Verifying initial training for new employees, and annual retraining is essential.

Additional Information and Resources

Portable fire extinguisher training is available from many sources, including:

- Training videos and booklets from fire extinguisher manufacturers such as ANSUL or Kidde Manufacturing
- Fire Prevention Bureaus of larger fire departments provide training officers and may provide “fire pan” demonstrations and employee training
- Fire extinguisher suppliers and service organizations may provide training assistance
- Most safety equipment and training providers offer fire extinguisher training materials

NFPA 10, *Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, Internet address www.nfpa.org