

Fire Extinguishers

Hazards

- Contents are under pressure and may explode when combined with other materials.
- Very old fire extinguishers may contain carbon tetrachloride, a known carcinogen.

Handling

- Two most common types include dry chemical (sodium bicarbonate or monoammonium phosphate) and carbon dioxide (CO₂) both of which are not hazardous.
- To empty contents, discharge outside, away from children or pets. Monoammonium phosphate is an irritant to eyes and the respiratory tract. Wear goggles and particulate mask when discharging extinguisher.

Management Options

Dry chemical extinguishers:

- May be discharged in an area where an acidic fertilizer would be used such as around evergreens. Do not use on lawns.
- When relieving the pressure (emptying) the container for disposal, review manufacturers' instructions, or, if unavailable, use the PASS technique
 - **P**ull the pin: this unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other seals or tamper indicators.
 - **A**im low: Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the item.
 - **S**queeze the lever above the handle: this discharges the extinguishing agent. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever.)
 - **S**weep from side to side.
- After pressure has been relieved (when nothing else comes out) remove the head from the container and place it with scrap metal or in the trash.

Carbon dioxide extinguishers:

- These extinguishers are refillable and should be refilled after each use. Check for Fire Extinguisher Recharging on an online search engine such as Google or Bing.
- If the extinguisher becomes defective, drill holes in the cylinder after pressure has been relieved and then place in the trash.
- Ask fire equipment companies in your area if they will accept used extinguishers (check an online search engine such as Google or Bing).

Very old fire extinguishers: Consult your local fire department or take to a local hazardous household waste collection or commercial hazardous waste facility.

[▲ Back to Table of Contents](#)