





HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR FIRE EXTINGUISHER

In many instances the requirement is defined by law as in the case of Passenger Carrying Vehicles and Heavy Goods Vehicles. Industrial/Commercial premises are required to have Fire Extinguishers but the quantity and type depend on the nature of the fire risk and it is always sensible to obtain specific guidance from the Local Fire Officer. Failure to do so could jeopardise Fire Insurance Cover.

All fires are made up of three elements; heat, oxygen and fuel. Remove any one or more of these elements and the fire will cease. Therefore, some Extinguishers cool/remove heat (eg. water), others remove oxygen (eg. carbon dioxide), and yet others work with a combination of cooling and excluding oxygen (eg. foam). Various types of powder act by a combination of smothering (excluding oxygen) and forming a chemical reaction with the fire by quenching the highly reactive particles in the fire.

The following matrix will assist in choosing the correct type of Fire Extinguisher or, as important, avoiding choosing the wrong one!

FIRE CLASSIFICATION	FOAM cream	BC POWDER blue	ABC POWDER blue	CARBON DIOXIDE black	WATER red
Fires involving solid materials such as wood, paper, textiles etc 	YES Smothering and cooling effect	YES BUT! Only on small surface fires	YES Rapid knockdown smothering effect prevents re-ignition	YES BUT! Only on small surface fires	YES Good cooling effects. Prevents re-ignition
Fires involving liquids, e.g. petrol, oil, fat, paint, solvents and grease 	YES Blankets fire and prevents re-ignition	YES Rapid knockdown	YES Rapid knockdown	YES Rapid knockdown. Leaves no residue	NO
Fires involving flammable gases, e.g. propane, butane, natural gas. 	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Electrical Fires involving electrical equipment 	YES / NO Foam can conduct electricity Check Product	YES Non-conductive	YES Non-conductive	YES Non-conductive. Beware in confined spaces	NO Water conducts electricity





The symbols above depicting each type of fire are shown in the following pages for the relevant types of Fire Extinguishers.

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