

Fire Extinguisher Safety for Construction: Fight or Flee

One of the most important things you need to know about fire extinguishers is when to use them and when NOT to use them.

Every fire has unique challenges, and every extinguisher has limitations.

Know the Risks

Fighting a fire can stop its spread and keep evacuation routes clear, but there are risks. Fires can increase in size and intensity in **SECONDS**, blocking exit paths and creating a hazardous atmosphere. Portable fire extinguishers contain a limited amount of extinguishing agent and can be discharged in a matter of **SECONDS**.

Fight or Flee?

Ask yourself:

- Is the fire too big for a portable fire extinguisher?
- Is the environment too hot and smoky, making it difficult to breathe?
- Is there a safe evacuation route?
- Do you know the fire size and is any of it hidden (behind walls/ceilings)?

You may be able to **FIGHT** the fire:

- The fire just started and is limited to the original material ignited
- There is a clear evacuation path behind you

You may need to **FLEE** if:

- The fire involves or has the potential to ignite flammable solvents
- Heat is too intense to get within 10-15 feet (3-4.5 meters) of the fire
- Smoke is quickly filling the area
- You must crawl on the ground due to heat or smoke

REMEMBER: If the fire is not contained and fire, heat or smoke may block the evacuation path, flee as quickly as possible.

Fire-Fighting Overview

IMPORTANT: To effectively use fire extinguishers, you need additional training and hands-on practice. This is just to give you an overview of best practices for fighting fires.

In general:

- Activate the emergency plan and clear the area
- Fight the fire if it is safe to do so
- If the fire becomes too dangerous or you are unable to put it out, evacuate immediately
- Use the **PASS** method
 - **P**ull the pin
 - **A**im the the nozzle
 - **S**queeze the trigger
 - **S**weep the nozzle side to side at the base of the fire