

## June 2011 Safety Meeting Fire Extinguishers Part II

Fire safety should be a major concern of all propane employees. It is important that employees be properly trained in the use of extinguishers before an incident occurs. Occupational Safety Health Act (OSHA) requirements state that employees must have fire extinguisher training yearly. As a continuation of May 2011 Safety Meeting, this month we will cover the proper selection and use of a portable fire extinguisher.

Selection of the proper fire extinguisher depends on numerous factors:

- Classification of the burning fuel (covered last month)
- Rating of the extinguisher
- Hazards to be protected
- Security of the fire
- Any life hazard or operational concerns

While the operating procedures of each type of extinguisher are similar, you should become familiar with the instructions found on the extinguisher at your facility or on your vehicle. Before using the extinguisher, do a quick check to assure that it is charged and operable. Such a check may protect you from injury caused by a defective extinguisher. Your quick inspection should include:

- External condition – no apparent damage
- Hose/nozzle in place
- Pressure gauge in operable range

When it becomes necessary to use an extinguisher, do not panic and follow these guidelines:

- Have someone call the fire department – Do not delay the call!
- Pull the safety pin at the top of the extinguisher breaking the plastic or thin wire seal in the process
- Approach flames from the windward side (wind at your back)
- Point the nozzle or horn in a safe direction and discharge a short burst to ensure proper operation. If the hose is clipped to the extinguisher body, release it before discharging the agent.

- Carry the extinguisher to within stream reach of the fire. Smaller extinguishers require a closer approach to the fire than larger units. Be aware that radiant heat may prohibit you from getting close enough for the agent to reach the fire. Adverse winds can also limit the reach of the agent. As a rule of thumb, 20lb. dry chemical extinguishers can have a reach of up to 20 ft.
- Aim the nozzle or horn toward the material that is burning.
- Squeeze the carrying handle and the discharge handle together to start the flow of agent. Release the handle to stop the flow.
- Sweep the nozzle back and forth at the base of the flames to ensure full coverage by the extinguishing agent until the fire is extinguished. Start at the rear edge of the fire and move forward while sweeping the nozzle from side to side. Do not plunge dry chemical into flammable liquid fires.
- Watch for smoldering hot spots or possible reigniting of flammable liquids. Make sure that the fire is out and be prepared to reapply agent if reigniting occurs.
- Back away from the fire area

Some other procedures to remember are

- If extinguishment is not achieved after an entire extinguisher has been discharged onto the fire, withdraw and reassess the situation.
- If more than one extinguisher is being used simultaneously, employees must work in unison and maintain a constant awareness of each others actions and positions.
- After extinguishers are empty, lay them on their sides. This procedure will signal incoming firefighters that they are empty and reduce the chance of someone taking one and approaching a fire with an empty extinguisher.
- Rule of thumb: a 20lb. dry chemical extinguisher will have about 25 seconds of discharge time.
- ABC rated fire extinguishers are acceptable to replace a BC rated unit.

### Class Discussion

Have employees discuss actual fire emergencies or training scenarios where an extinguisher was used. Have employees review the selection steps for the proper extinguisher. Employees should review the steps for properly using a fire extinguisher.\*

### Closing

Know your limitations and the limitations of your equipment. Never extinguish a propane fire unless the flow of product can be shut off. Some fires may overpower your extinguisher. These are losers. There is an old saying: “Risk little to save little, risk a lot to save a lot.”

\*Contact your local fire department for live fire extinguisher training.

June 2011 Safety Test  
Fire Extinguishers

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Read and answer each of the following questions. When complete, grade the test and review incorrect answers so each employee is "armed" with the correct answers before they leave the training.

(1) A quick check inspection before using a fire extinguisher should include:

- (A) External condition is ok
- (B) Hose/nozzle is in place
- (C) Pressure gauge is in operable range
- (D) All of the above

(2) Before attacking a fire the 1<sup>st</sup> step should be to \_\_\_\_\_.

- (A) Call the fire department
- (B) Pull the safety pin
- (C) Do a quick check
- (D) Position yourself on the windward side

(3) Always attempt to approach the fire from the \_\_\_\_\_ side.

- (A) Leeward
- (B) Windward
- (C) Wayward
- (D) Sunny

(4) As a rule of thumb, a 20lb. ABC extinguisher can reach up to \_\_\_\_\_ feet.

- (A) 10
- (B) 20
- (C) 25
- (D) 50

(5) After extinguishers are empty lay them \_\_\_\_\_.

- (A) Upright
- (B) Down wind
- (C) On their side
- (D) Up wind

(6) Fire extinguisher users should plunge the chemical into the burning flammable liquid to aid extinguishment.

(A) True

(B) False

(7) If more than one extinguisher is being used simultaneously, employees must work in unison and maintain constant awareness.

(A) True

(B) False

(8) Never extinguish a propane fire unless the flow of product can be shut off.

(A) True

(B) False

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Answer Key

1. D
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. B
7. A
8. A