



COMMON FINDS: FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

SECTION 1. FIRE EXTINGUISHER PLACEMENT, INSPECTIONS AND STORAGE

BACKGROUND:

Public entities provide tools to keep their employees safe, including portable fire extinguishers. OSHA standards highlight the need for employers to ensure fire extinguishers are maintained regularly and can be accessed appropriately. CIRMA Risk Management commonly finds fire extinguishers that are not inspected monthly or are stored improperly during our Facility Hazard Assessments.

OBSERVATION:

Upon completing multiple inspections, it was observed that the fire extinguishers:

- needed to have their tags filled out
- required signage
- were unsecured in storage

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Regularly annotate the monthly inspection tag, ensure appropriate signage indicates the fire extinguisher's location, and appropriately secure the extinguisher in storage per the OSHA standards listed below.

- **1910.157(e)(2):** Portable extinguishers or hoses used in lieu thereof under paragraph (d)(3) of this section shall be visually inspected monthly
- **1910.157(c)(1):** The employer shall provide portable fire extinguishers and mount, locate, and identify them so that they are readily accessible to employees without posing a possible injury
- **1910.101(b):** The storage of all compressed gases in cylinders shall follow Compressed Gas Association Pamphlet P-1-1965, as specified in Section 1910.6

SOME OTHER TIPS:

- Inspect your portable fire extinguishers and fill out the inspection tag monthly to ensure that:
 - The fire extinguisher is in place and secured
 - The fire extinguisher is charged (the needle is pointing to the green zone)
 - The fire extinguisher pin is in place
- Mount and secure portable fire extinguishers to protect them from the ground, preventing rusting or accidental tipping
- Establish and raise awareness of your entity's portable fire extinguisher policy to staff, highlighting the need for monthly inspections and procedures for taking a portable fire extinguisher out of service

SECTION 2. IMPORTANCE OF A FIRE EXTINGUISHER POLICY

BACKGROUND:

Municipal and school district buildings are equipped with fire extinguishers, which can be a valuable component of a comprehensive fire prevention strategy. However, their presence also brings specific responsibilities that employers may overlook.

Under OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.157(g), employers are required to train employees on how to respond in the event of a fire, including whether or not they are expected to use a fire extinguisher.

CIRMA Risk Management commonly finds that many employers lack clear, written policies regarding fire extinguisher use.

OBSERVATION:

Municipalities have been cited by CONN-OSHA for not having a fire extinguisher policy in place and have partnered with CIRMA to achieve improved levels of compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Implement a clear policy based on the requirements of OSHA 29 CFR 1910.157(g)(1). Consider establishing these emergency action plan procedures in accordance with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.38(c) and 1910.39(c):

- **1910.157(g)(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 firefighting.
- **1910.157(a):** Where extinguishers are provided but are not intended for employee use and the employer has an emergency action plan and a fire prevention plan that meet the requirements of 29 CFR 1910.38 and 29 CFR 1910.39 respectively.
- **1910.38(c):** An emergency action plan must include at a minimum:
 - Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency;
 - Procedures for emergency evacuation, including type of evacuation and exit route assignments;
 - Procedures to be followed by employees who remain onsite to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate;
 - Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation;
 - Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue or medical duties; and
 - The name or job title of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the plan or an explanation of their duties under the plan.
- **1910.39(c):** A fire prevention plan must include:
 - A list of all major fire hazards, proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials, potential ignition sources and their control, and the type of fire protection equipment necessary to control each major hazard;
 - Procedures to control accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials;
 - Procedures for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials;
 - The name or job title of employees responsible for maintaining equipment to prevent or control sources of ignition or fires; and responsible for the control of fuel source hazards.

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