

Safetyline

Apartment Association of Michigan

Benefits

Member

Membership in the Apartment Association carries benefits beyond savings on Work Comp insurance. Members join a network of their peers; thus gaining access to information sharing and the tools needed for effective loss control.

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Please Note: The content herein represents general information and should not replace actual training.

Fire Prevention and Extinguisher Training

Seminar Will Feature Fire-Fighting Demonstration

Editor's Note: We encourage all of our members to use this information as a starting point for effective safety communication. Members should add to it based on their safety needs and work environments.

A building fire is reported in the United States every 62 seconds. Additionally, a fire doubles in size every 60 seconds. Although the fire extinguishers hanging on the walls of your complexes may give you peace of mind, do you feel comfortable that your employees know how to use them?

Ask one of your employees how long it takes to completely discharge a fire extinguisher. Have you or your employees ever practiced extinguishing a fire? Hopefully not a real one, but one under controlled circumstances.

The chance to do so will present itself when the Apartment Association, Smith-Peabody-Stiles and CMI host a loss prevention seminar (see

back page for time and details) on fire prevention. More importantly, those attending will be given the opportunity to use a fire extinguisher to fight a controlled fire (weather permitting).

Like most seminars, there will be a classroom portion where a veteran fire fighter will cover elements of fire prevention. Following this, participants will move outside where things get really hot. In a controlled environment, training will take place in the proper operation of a fire extinguisher and how to approach a fire in order to maintain safety.

Under the close supervision of the instructor, participants will be allowed to use the fire extinguishers on burning fire pans. This is a class your employees will remember so hurry and sign up as class size is limited.

SAFETY FIRST

Even though extinguishers come in a number of shapes and sizes, they all operate in a similar manner. P.A.S.S. is an easy acronym for the use of most fire extinguisher.

P—Pull the Pin at the top of the extinguisher. The pin releases a locking mechanism and will allow you to discharge the extinguisher.

A—Aim at the base of the fire, not the flames. This is important - in order to put out the fire, you must extinguish the fuel.

S—Squeeze the lever slowly. This will release

the extinguishing agent in the extinguisher. If the handle is released, the discharge will stop.

S—Sweep from side to side. Using a sweeping motion, move the fire extinguisher back and forth until the fire is completely out. Operate the extinguisher from a safe distance, several feet away, and then move towards the fire once it starts to diminish. Be sure to read the instructions on your fire extinguisher - different fire extinguishers recommend operating them from different distances. Remember: Aim at the base of the fire, not at the flames.

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To receive a copy of Safetyline, contact Brenda Boomer at bab@spsinsurance.com, or access it online at: www.apartments.org

Not Every Extinguisher Is Created The Same; Know What Codes Mean

The following represent the most common type of fire extinguishers:

- **Water extinguishers** or APW extinguishers (air-pressurized water) are suitable for class A fires only. Never use a water extinguisher on grease fires, electrical fires or class D fires—the flames will spread and make the fire bigger. Water extinguishers are filled with water and pressurized with oxygen. Again—water extinguishers can be very dangerous in the wrong type of situation. Only fight the fire if you're certain it contains ordinary combustible materials only.
- **Dry chemical** extinguishers come in a variety of types and are suitable for a combination of class A, B and C fires. These are filled with foam or powder and pressurized with nitrogen.
- **BC**—This is the regular type of dry chemical extinguisher. It is filled with sodium bicarbonate or potassium bicarbonate. The BC variety leaves a mildly corrosive residue which must be cleaned immediately to prevent any damage to materials.
- **ABC**—This is the multipurpose dry chemical extinguisher. The ABC type is filled with mono ammonium phosphate, a yellow powder that leaves a sticky residue that may be damaging to electrical appliances such as a computer. Dry

chemical extinguishers have an advantage over CO2 extinguishers since they leave a non-flammable substance on the extinguished material, reducing the likelihood of re-ignition.

- **Carbon Dioxide (CO2)** extinguishers are used for class B and C fires. CO2 extinguishers contain carbon dioxide, a non-flammable gas, and are highly pressurized. The pressure is so great that it is not uncommon for bits of dry ice to shoot out the nozzle. They don't work very well on class A fires because they may not be able to displace enough oxygen to put the fire out, causing it to re-ignite. CO2 extinguishers have an advantage over dry chemical extinguishers since they don't leave a harmful residue—a good choice for an electrical fire on a computer or other favorite electronic device such as a stereo or TV.

It is vital to know what type of extinguisher you are using. Using the wrong type of extinguisher for the wrong type of fire can be life-threatening.

These are only the common types of fire extinguishers. There are many others to choose from. Base your selection on the classification and the extinguisher's compatibility with the items you wish to protect.

Type And Cause Of Fire Determines Which Extinguisher To Use

With so many fire extinguishers to choose from, selecting the proper one for your needs can be a daunting task.

While the number and availability of a fire extinguisher is important, just as important is ensuring you have the proper type of fire extinguisher.

Fire extinguishers are divided into four categories, based on different types of fires. Each fire extinguisher also has a numerical rating that serves as a guide for the amount of fire the extinguisher can handle.

The higher the number, the more fire-fighting power. The following is a quick guide to help choose the right type of extinguisher:

- **Class A** extinguishers are for ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood, cardboard,

and most plastics. The numerical rating on these types of extinguishers indicates the amount of water it holds and the amount of fire it can extinguish.

- **Class B** fire extinguishers—Class B fires involve flammable or combustible liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, grease and oil. The numerical rating for class B extinguishers indicates the approximate number of square feet of fire it can extinguish.
- **Class C** fire extinguishers—Class C fires involve electrical equipment, such as appliances, wiring, circuit breakers and outlets. Never use water to extinguish class C fires—the risk of electrical shock is far too great. Class C extinguishers

do not have a numerical rating. The C classification means the extinguishing agent is non-conductive.

- **Class D** fire extinguishers are commonly found in a chemical laboratory. They are for fires that involve combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium, potassium and sodium. These types of extinguishers also have no numerical rating, nor are they given a multi-purpose rating—they are designed for class D fires only.

Some fires may involve a combination of these classifications. Your fire extinguishers should have ABC ratings on them.

SAFETY FIRST

How a fire extinguisher works: Fire needs fuel, oxygen and heat in order to burn. In simple terms, fire extinguishers remove one of these elements by applying an agent that either cools the burning fuel, or removes or displaces the surrounding oxygen.

SAFETY MEETING

FOR THE APARTMENT INDUSTRY

COMPANY NAME _____ JOB NAME _____ DATE _____

Fire Safety And Prevention; Knowledge Is Key

All fires can be very dangerous and life-threatening. Your safety should always be your primary concern when attempting to fight a fire. Before deciding to fight a fire, be certain that:

- The fire is small and not spreading. A fire can double in size within 60 seconds.
- You have the proper fire extinguisher for what is burning.
- The fire won't block your exit if you can't control it. A good way to ensure this is to keep the exit at your back.
- You know your fire extinguisher works. Inspect extinguishers once a month for dents, leaks or other signs of damage. Assure the pressure is at the recommended level. On extinguishers equipped with a gauge, the needle should be in the green zone—not too high and not too low.
- You know how to use your fire extinguisher. There's not enough time to read instructions when a fire occurs.

How to Fight a Fire Safely:

- Always stand with an exit at your back.
- Stand several feet away from the fire, moving closer once the fire starts to diminish.
- Use a sweeping motion and aim at the base of the fire.
- If possible, use a "buddy system" to have someone back you up or call for help if something goes wrong.
- Be sure to watch the area for awhile to ensure it doesn't re-ignite.

Never Fight A Fire If:

- The fire is spreading rapidly. Only use a fire extinguisher when the fire is in its early stages. If the fire is already spreading quickly, evacuate and call the fire department.
- You don't know what is burning. Unless you know what is burning, you won't know what type of fire extinguisher to use. Even if you have an ABC extinguisher, there could be something that will explode or produce highly toxic smoke.
- You don't have the proper fire extinguisher. The wrong type of extinguisher can be dangerous or life-threatening.
- There is too much smoke or you are at risk of inhaling smoke. Seven out of ten fire-related deaths occur from breathing poisonous gases produced by the fire.

Any sort of fire will produce some amount of carbon monoxide, the most deadly gas produced by a fire. Materials such as wool, silk, nylon and some plastics can produce other highly toxic gases such as carbon dioxide, hydrogen cyanide, or hydrogen chloride. Beware—all of these can be fatal.

Smoke inhalation or exposure to fire itself can be life threatening so get educated about the basics in CPR and burn treatment.

SPECIAL TOPICS FOR YOUR PROJECT: _____

EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

Meeting attended by:

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Fax this page to the head of your safety team

Loss Control Management

**The Agenda:
Fire Safety
And Prevention**

Hands-on demonstration;
*Extinguish a fire in a
Controlled setting*

Loss control seminars are designed to enhance existing safety programs as well as bring members new information for an ever-changing industry.

Association Members: You're Invited to a Loss Control Seminar September 25, 2009 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

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