



# Portable Fire Extinguishers

West Virginia University  
Environmental Health and Safety



## Four Types of Fires

1. **Class A** – Fires in ordinary combustible materials such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber, and many plastics.
2. **Class B** – Fires in flammable or combustible liquids, gases, greases, and some rubber and plastic materials.
3. **Class C** – Fires that involve energized electrical equipment where the electrical non-conductivity of the extinguishing media is important.
4. **Class D**. Fires in combustible metals such as magnesium, titanium, zirconium, and potassium.

## Portable Fire Extinguisher Use and Requirements

- Sound the nearest building fire alarm and evacuate the building when smoke/fire is first discovered.
- Call 911 (9-911 from campus phones) and report the fire, regardless of the size.
- Do not attempt to fight a structure fire; employees are not authorized to fight structure fires.
- Use is limited to those employees that voluntarily agree to use portable fire extinguishers, and have received proper training.
- Never use a portable fire extinguisher on a fire that is beyond its capacity (i.e., a structure fire).
- Use the properly rated portable fire extinguisher for the type of fire. For example, an ABC rated portable fire extinguisher may be used on Class A, Class B, or Class C fires.
- Remember the acronym “PASS” to recall the steps for deploying a portable fire extinguisher:
  - P – Pull the pin.
  - A – Aim the extinguisher nozzle toward the base of the flames.
  - S – Squeeze the trigger while holding the extinguisher canister upright.
  - S – Sweep the extinguisher from side to side, causing the fire area to be covered.
- Use a portable fire extinguisher while you are located between an escape route and the fire.
- Never attempt to use a portable fire extinguisher if the fire has spread beyond its starting point.
- Leave the fire area whenever:
  - The escape route becomes threatened;
  - The portable fire extinguisher becomes depleted; or
  - The fire becomes uncontrollable.

