

EUROFEU



Portable Fire Extinguishers Section

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**Position paper / best practice guideline
on the critical importance of**

portable fire extinguishers

in fire protection of people and goods



General Secretary

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EFSAAC

**European Fire and
Security Advisory Council**

endorsed

1. Context :

- Most people are unaware of the benefit of correctly installed and regularly maintained portable fire extinguishers.
- A number of surveys have been carried, at national and European level, all of which confirm the successful use of portable fire extinguishers.
- In some countries, national standards covering fire extinguishers servicing are in place, and debate is open on the opportunity to standardise maintenance at European level.

With these points in mind, Eurofeu PFES has drafted this best practice guideline in the form of typical questions about portable fire extinguishers to assist the decision maker with their choice.

2. What is a portable fire extinguisher ?

- An efficient manual *first* action tool to prevent fire in the early stages growing and limiting damage and saving lives.
- Being very easy to use, a portable fire extinguisher can be operated by anybody. You do not need to be a professional fire-fighter to extinguish a small fire with a portable fire extinguisher. Although training is needed to obtain maximum efficiency.
- A tool which can co-exist with other means of fire fighting and part of overall fire protection. Portable extinguisher can provide a level of protection against developing fires, but which is definitely the fastest to operate and should be the first to be used to attempt to extinguish a fire.

3. What are the applicable Legislation & Standards covering portable fire extinguishers?

- European Directive: Portable extinguishers are required to be **CE marked** in accordance with the requirements of the **Pressure Equipment Directive (97/23/EC)** as far as pressure risk is concerned, this process is supervised by a European Notified Body.
- European standards covering the manufacture: EN3-7/A1 + EN3-10 cover fire performance and technical characteristics. Conformity to these standards is attested by third party approval, made by a European certification body.

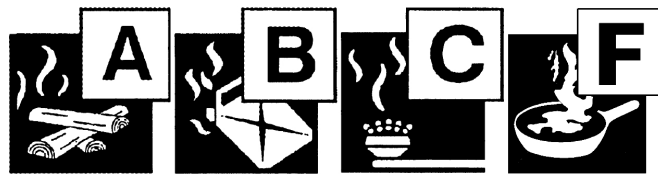
4. How to specify portable fire extinguishers :

- In order to ensure adequate level of protection, the type quantity and location of portable fire extinguishers should be determined by a risk assessment of the premises.
- Insurers may have specific additional requirements and these should be taken into consideration.
- In some countries risk assessment is governed by legislation. In addition national rules may exist.
- It is strongly recommended that this process is performed by a qualified (competent) person and/or qualified companies, to provide best advice and to provide a suitable portable fire extinguisher installation. Site specific hazards need careful consideration to maximise the portable fire extinguishers installation's efficiency.

The location of extinguishers should be clearly visible and clearly indicated.



Example of location pictogram
for a fire extinguisher

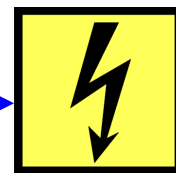


Fire classes pictograms

showing on which fires a fire extinguisher can be used

A: Flammable solids; **B:** Flammable liquids; **C:** Gases; **F:** Cooking oil or fat

Pictogram showing that a fire extinguisher can be used
on **life electrical equipment** (in the limits of instructions)



5. Where and when to use portable fire extinguishers:

- All premises where people work, live and have access to, for example, work places, storage premises and residential buildings.
- When a small fire is identified after an alarm has activated and the fire brigade alerted.
- When an alarm is activated because a fire in the early stages is detected, it is an opportunity where a portable fire extinguisher can be used with a maximum chance of success to extinguish a small fire.

6. Why should you service / maintain a portable fire extinguisher:

- The fact is that the proper function of a portable fire extinguisher cannot be checked without using it, and then it needs refilling or replacement. Therefore, the regular service of a portable fire extinguisher is the best way to **ensure it will work in case of real and emergency need.**

This is the main reason why a portable extinguisher needs to be serviced regularly.

- In order to maintain the required level of protection.
- In addition, when regularly servicing a portable fire extinguisher, the competent person will identify all changes to the risks that have an impact of the fire protection in relation to the extinguisher installation, and will give the appropriate recommendations to maintain the original level of fire protection.
- Local rules, standards or legislation may exist, covering technical content and periodicity of the service. These rules shall be strictly followed by both the qualified service company and the end user/owner of the premises.
- As a comparison: Nowadays many places are fitted with heart defibrillators. As with fire extinguishers, they need to be easy to find, and are required to work first time. Therefore, both fire extinguishers and heart defibrillators need to be regularly maintained to ensure that they are always available for use.

For all reasons described above, with a properly designed, installed and serviced portable fire extinguisher installation, when an portable fire extinguisher is used correctly it will extinguish a small fire avoiding greater damage, protecting lives and minimising financial loss.

So don't wait to extinguish a fire in the early stages with your extinguishers!!

We all work to protect our environment.
An efficient portable fire extinguisher installation where a fire risk exists
is a positive contribution to protect the environment.

Thanks for your personal contribution
to protect human lives and global environment!