FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

There are five classes of fires: A, B, C, D and K. Fire extinguishers come in different types and are labeled with the standard symbols or letters for the fires they can put out. Using the wrong extinguisher can be dangerous. Familiarize yourself with the classes of fires and your extinguisher before you have to deal with a fire. The sections below summarize the classes of fires and how to use an extinguisher.

Types of Fires

- Class A: ordinary combustibles such as paper and wood
- Class B: flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, some paints and solvents
- Class C: energized electrical equipment such as power tools, wiring, fuse boxes, appliances, TVs, computers, and electric motors
- Class D: combustible metals such as magnesium, potassium and sodium
- Class K: cooking oils in commercial cooking equipment

Types of Fire Extinguishers

- Dry Chemical (mainly used on campus): are usually for multi-purpose use - contain an extinguishing agent and use a compressed, non-flammable gas as a propellant
- Water: contain water and compressed gas and should only be used on Class A (ordinary combustibles) fires
- Carbon Dioxide (CO2): most effective on Class B and C (liquids and electrical) fires - effective range is from 3 - 8 ft
- Halon (not widely used): contain a gas that interrupts the chemical reaction when fuels burn
  1. Often used to protect valuable electrical equipment since there is no residue
  2. Effective range is from 4 - 6 ft
  3. Application should be at the base of the fire, even after the flames are put out

Fighting a Small Fire

- Before fighting a small fire, make sure everyone is leaving the area, that somebody has called the fire department, that you have an exit behind you, that the fire is not spreading, that you know what’s burning, that you have the right extinguisher and that you are trained to use it
- Stand 6-8 ft away from the fire, leave if the fire is not extinguished
- Remember the word PASS to operate the extinguisher
  1. P - Pull the pin
  2. A - Aim at the base of the fire
  3. S - Squeeze the handles together
  4. S - Sweep from side to side

Come out annually to one of our recurring sessions and develop the confidence to use an extinguisher successfully. Visit www.ehs.ucr.edu for additional information or call EH&S at 827-5528 if you have any questions.