

Portable fire extinguishers

Division 2/Subdivision L • OAR 437-002-0187



Oregon OSHA's Portable Fire Extinguisher rules state that it's an employer's responsibility "To assure that you provide functional extinguishers and your employees know when and how to use them safely."

(Note: [The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal](#) and your local fire marshal also have rules that apply to portable fire extinguishers.)

There are full and partial exemptions to the rules.

Full exemption

If employers have fire extinguishers, but they are not accessible and employees are not allowed to use them, then employers are exempt from [OAR 437-002-0187](#). The employer **must have a written fire safety policy** that requires an immediate evacuation of employees, as well as an emergency action plan and fire prevention plan that conform to the rules found in [OAR 437-002-0042](#) and [OAR 437-002-0043](#).

Partial exemption

If extinguishers are present and accessible, but the employer does not intend for employees to use them, AND the employer has an emergency action plan and fire prevention plan that meet [OAR 437-002-0042](#) and [OAR 437-002-0043](#), then in [OAR 437-002-0187](#) only paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 apply.

The fire extinguisher rules require that employers:

- properly select and place the extinguishers
- inspect and maintain extinguishers
- perform hydrostatic testing according to [Table 3 of the rules](#)
- train employees to use extinguishers — *Only when their use is required*

Fire extinguisher selection and distribution

Employers must mount, locate, and identify all extinguishers' locations for easy employee access. Do not obstruct them from view. Employees must be able to find and use extinguishers without being exposed to injury.

Select and place fire extinguishers based on the class of potential workplace fires. Fire extinguishers are classified by their ability to handle specific classes and sizes of fires, as noted by their distinct colored lettering:



Class A – ordinary combustibles; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 75 feet or less.

Class B – flammable liquid and gas fires; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 50 feet or less.

Class C – electrical fires; usually Class A or Class B fires involving energized electrical wiring and equipment; travel distance based on the fuel source (flammable or combustible).

Class D – combustible metals; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 75 feet or less.

Class K – cooking/restaurant kitchen fires; travel distance is no more than 30 feet.

Extinguisher inspection, maintenance, and testing

Employers are responsible for the inspection, maintenance, and testing of portable fire extinguishers, and must conduct **monthly visual inspections**.

Employers must ensure that fire extinguishers are fully charged, operable, and in their designated place at all times; employers must provide equivalent protection when extinguishers are removed for maintenance or recharging. Likewise, have trained persons with suitable testing equipment and facilities conduct hydrostatic testing based on [OAR 437-002-0187\(3\)](#) requirements, and remove extinguishers that fail this testing.

Employee training

Employers must provide training to new employees, and at least annually for employees whose employers either require or allow the use of fire extinguishers. A training program must familiarize employees with the general principles of fire extinguisher use, fire hazards, and the use of appropriate equipment.

Emergency exit requirements

Every workplace must have enough exits suitably located to enable everyone to safely evacuate the facility during an emergency. Considerations include: the type of structure, the number of persons exposed, the fire protection available, the type of industry involved, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure. Fire doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside. Exit routes from buildings must be free of obstructions, have adequate lighting, and be properly marked with exit signs. See [OAR 437-002-0041](#), *Exits and Exit Routes*.

Employers must comply with requirements under [OAR 437-002-0187](#) based on their circumstances.

Resources

- 📄 [Oregon OSHA's fire protection information](#)
- 📄 [Oregon OSHA's Division 2/L, Fire Protection rules](#)
- 📄 [Federal OSHA fire safety fact sheet](#)



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Workers

Your employer cannot retaliate against you for reporting a workplace health or safety concern or violation. For more information about your rights, visit the Oregon OSHA website.

The Technical Section of Oregon OSHA produced this fact sheet to highlight health and safety programs and rules. The information is intended to supplement the rules and provide best practices to employers.