

Opinion: Be ready to use a fire extinguisher

By Tracy Franklin

This is the sixth of a series of articles highlighting emergency preparedness. Use these tools to prepare yourself for an emergency. More information is available in the city's website.

Pre-planning is key to your safety.

When it comes to fire – be smart. If the fire is too big for you to handle, immediately get out of the house. Don't stop to gather anything or to do anything. Once you are outside, stay outside. Intense heat and toxic fumes can kill you.



Planning and practicing fire safety:

- 1) Choose a reunion place outside of your home. Regularly remind all household members where this place is.
- 2) Draw the floor plan of your home, and discuss two ways to exit each room.
- 3) Hold a fire drill at least twice a year. Blindfolded, practice crawling your exit routes to simulate getting out of a smoke-filled house.

Fire extinguishers:

Locate your fire extinguishers with care. Ready access to them is critical. Fire moves quickly. Quick access can be the

difference between putting a small fire out or suffering much damage.

Several smaller extinguishers located throughout the house are better than one large one that may be difficult to get to quickly.

Key places for your extinguishers are:

- The kitchen
- The garage
- One on every level if your home has multiple floors.

A:B:C extinguishers are recommended:

- “A” fires – ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth and many plastics.
- “B” fires – flammable liquids such as gasoline, paints, kitchen grease, and oils.
- “C” fires – electrical equipment, such as fires in wiring, motors and appliances.

* Check your extinguishes on a regular basis to ensure they are properly charged.

Using a fire extinguisher:

- Try to keep calm
- Vital: Keep an escape route open between you and the small fire you are attempting to extinguish. If the fire is large or becomes too large, immediately get out of the house. Close the door on your way out to slow the spread of flames.
- Always point the extinguisher at the base of the fire rather than at the top of the flames.
- Remember, if the fire is too big for you to handle,

immediately get yourself and your family out of the house. Don't stop to gather anything. Seconds can make all the difference.

- Once you are outside, stay outside. Intense heat and toxic fumes can kill you in seconds.

P.A.S.S. – A proven and effective system for putting out a fire

- P. Pull the pin.
- A. Aim at the base of flame.
- S. Squeeze the handle.
- S. Sweep the hose side to side.

Possible fires following earthquakes:

Natural gas fires:

- First, shut off the gas.
- Second, put the fire out by using an extinguisher, dirt, or water.

Electrical fires:

- First, shut off the electricity.
- Second, put out the fire by using an extinguisher, dirt, or water.

Oil or grease fires:

- Use baking soda, a lid, a bread board, or a fire extinguisher to smother the flames.
- Never use water on a grease or oil fire.

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