



Information Bulletin

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Frequently Asked Questions: Portable Fire Extinguishers

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FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA



Frequently Asked Questions: Portable Fire Extinguishers

Leading and supporting a professional industry to minimise the impact of fire on life, property and the environment, for a safer community

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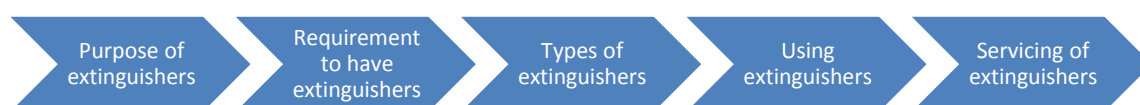
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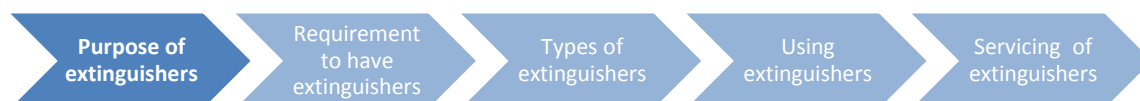
1.0 Purpose Statement

This Information Bulletin provides some basic information on portable fire extinguishers, including what their purpose is, when they are required, what types of extinguisher are suitable for different fires, how to use them and the requirements to have extinguishers serviced.



IMPORTANT—This Information Bulletin only provides an overview of the factors around the selection, use and servicing of portable fire extinguishers. For detailed advice regarding the minimum requirements appropriate for your situation, contact the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) that approves the installation (e.g. a building surveyor/certifier). If there is no such person involved—the relevant regulator or a fire protection company that supplies and/or services portable fire extinguishers.

2.0 What is the purpose of a portable fire extinguisher?



A portable fire extinguisher is a portable appliance that can be used by members of the public for the purpose of attempting to extinguish a fire in its initial growth stages before it becomes unsafe to do so.

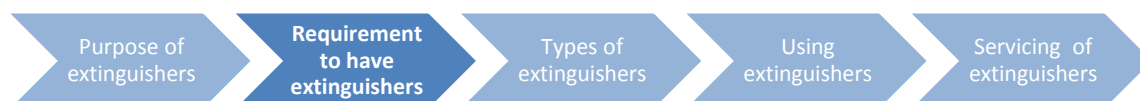
To improve the likelihood of this occurring, the following factors need to be considered:

- **Location**—Extinguishers need to be located in the vicinity of (but not too close to) hazards, along normal paths of travel and near exits.
- **Type**—Potential fuel sources and any potential hazards (e.g. electrical equipment) need to be identified and extinguishers suitably selected for the likely hazard.
- **Use**—Extinguishers appropriate for fighting the applicable class and size of fire need to be selected and used.
- **Servicing**—Extinguishers need to be routinely serviced so they are ready and operable or capable of operating when used in a fire emergency.

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3.0 Do I need a portable fire extinguisher?



When determining if an extinguisher is required—and the number and type of extinguishers needed—it depends on where they are to be installed (e.g. in a building, vehicle or vessel). It also depends on the potential fire hazards and therefore the class of fire that may occur. The following provides some general information on the requirements for buildings, vehicles and vessels.

3.1 For new buildings

Building legislation in all States and Territories refers to the Building Code of Australia (BCA)—Volumes 1 and 2 of the National Construction Code (NCC). These prescribe Performance Requirements for the construction of new buildings in Australia.

The BCA Performance Requirements can be met by either:

- Complying with the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions (Deemed-to-Satisfy Solution) in the BCA—which are so named because they are deemed to satisfy the BCA's Performance Requirements.
- or
- Complying with an approved Performance Solution—which is developed to meet the BCA's Performance Requirements.

NOTE—Performance Solutions were formerly known as Alternative Solutions prior to NCC 2016, which was implemented as of 1 May 2016.

The Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions for portable fire extinguishers in all buildings (except personal residences*) are detailed in BCA Volume 1 Clause E1.6. This clause requires portable fire extinguishers to be provided as per the Clause and Table E1.6. It also states that these required extinguishers are to be selected, located and distributed in accordance with Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Australian Standard AS 2444-2001, *Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets—Selection and location*.

**This includes houses (Class 1 buildings), garages (Class 10a buildings) and individual apartments in apartment buildings (Class 2 buildings) but not the common areas of apartment buildings.*

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While these Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions are quite specific for some building classifications (Class 2 or 3 buildings or a Class 4 part of a building), for most building classifications these provisions generally specify the class(es) of fire* risk to be covered based on the building's classification, fire hazards present and/or compartment size (see Table E1.6). The detail of the selection, location and distribution of extinguishers to cover these risks is then specified in the referenced sections of AS 2444, which provides guidance on the type and how many extinguishers are required based on the:

- Hazards (and therefore classes of fire)
- Extinguisher classifications and ratings
and
- Other factors, such as, the floor space and layout of the building, whether a fire sprinklers system is installed, etc.

*Classes of fire are covered in Section 4.1 of this Information Bulletin.

The BCA Performance Requirements are the minimum requirements to be met. Depending on the hazards in your building you may choose to install additional extinguishers (or other fire protection measures) to address hazards not readily covered under the BCA. If additional extinguishers are to be installed, we recommend that these are also selected, located and distributed in accordance with AS 2444.

Also, as mentioned above, extinguishers are not required in personal residences. However, FPA Australia and all fire brigades recommend you have at least one for your own protection in the home, particularly in areas such as garages and kitchens where there are many potential fire hazards (e.g. wood, petrol, paints, solvents, etc.) and ignition sources.

3.2 For existing buildings

For an existing building, when determining if extinguishers were required to be installed (including number, location and type) this should have been identified and approved at the time of building approval or occupancy approval. This may mean:

- Extinguishers were required
- That the building may have had an approval to omit extinguishers (typically if another fire protection measure (e.g. a fire sprinkler system) is in place)
or
- Extinguishers may not have been required.

IMPORTANT—There is no requirement to retrospectively install or upgrade portable fire

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extinguishers to meet new/current standards or requirements—buildings are only required to meet the requirements applicable to their original approval.

3.3 Vehicles

The requirements for portable fire extinguishers in vehicles are likely detailed in the applicable legislation in your state or territory (e.g. dangerous goods transport legislation or other transport legislation).

In some cases, this legislation will specify the type and location. Where this is not specified, AS 2444-2001, *Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets—Selection and location* should be used for guidance as it includes recommendations on the minimum classification and rating for extinguishers in vehicles as well as where they should be located.

While not all vehicles are required to have an extinguisher, FPA Australia recommends that, like for personal residences, any vehicle should have a portable fire extinguisher (or extinguishers) in accordance with Section 5 of AS 2444-2001 for the protection of the vehicle user. This is especially applicable for vehicles transporting flammable goods.

3.4 Vessels (boats, ships and the like)

The requirements for portable fire extinguishers in vessels are detailed:

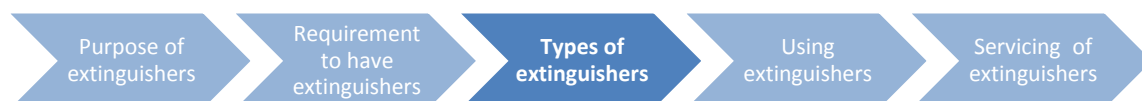
- For recreational vessels—In the state or territory marine safety legislation
- For commercial vessels—Also in the state or territory marine safety legislation (which, in turn, typically references the National Standard for Commercial Vessels).

Recreational vessels typically only require an extinguisher where there is an electric ignition type motor, gas installation or fuel stove. All commercial vessels require extinguishers. For more information contact the transport authority in your state or territory or the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

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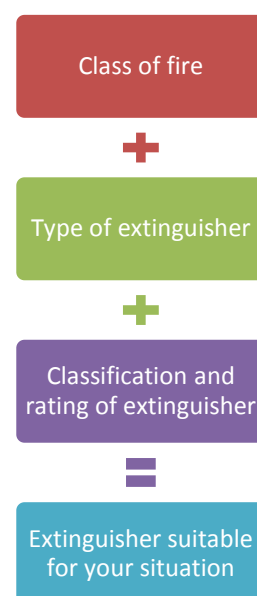
4.0 What type of extinguisher do I need?



There are several factors you need to consider to understand what type of extinguisher is required:

- **Class of fire**—Fire behaviour is characterised by the type of fuel involved. Accordingly, AS 2444 provides a classification for different fires based on fuels
- **Type of extinguisher**—Different types of extinguishers are effective on different classes of fire
- **Classification and rating of extinguisher**—Extinguishers have classifications and ratings which identify:
 - What classes of fire they are effective on (classification), and
 - How effective they are on particular classes (rating).

These factors combine to ensure you have an extinguisher suited to your situation.



4.1 Classes of fires





There are different classes of fire, each class covering different materials or substances with similar properties in regards to fire.

These classes of fire are detailed in Table 4.1 on the following pages.

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Table 4.1 Classes of fire

| Class | Pictograph | Description |
|---------|---|---|
| Class A |  | Fires involving carbon-based solids, such as, wood, cloth, paper, rubber and many plastics. |
| Class B |  | Fires involving flammable and combustible liquids, such as, petrol, oil, paint, solvents, etc. |
| Class C |  | Fires involving combustible gases, such as, natural gas, propane, etc. |
| Class D | | Fires involving certain combustible metals, such as, sodium, potassium, sodium-potassium, magnesium and others. |
| Class E |  | This is not actually a class of fire—electricity does not burn—but rather identifies extinguishers suitable to be used on equipment that is electrically energised. |

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| Class | Pictograph | Description |
|---------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Class F |  | Fires involving cooking oils or fats. |

4.2 Types of extinguishers

Extinguisher types are defined by the type of extinguishing agent they use. The extinguishing agent is the medium contained within the extinguisher which, when released, is capable of extinguishing a fire.

To understand how these agents extinguish a fire, a basic understanding of fire dynamics is required.

Fire is the visible effect of the process of combustion—a chemical reaction that occurs between oxygen and fuel when the fuel is heated to its ignition temperature. Combustion produces heat and light energy (flames) and by-products, such as smoke and other gases and will keep going as long as there is sufficient heat, fuel and oxygen.

This is often represented in the ‘fire tetrahedron’ (see below).

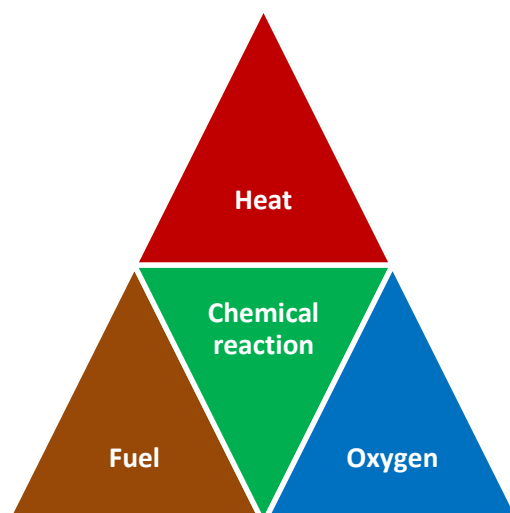


Figure 1 Fire tetrahedron



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To extinguish a fire, one or more of these elements must be eliminated, separated or reduced to a level that no longer allows this chemical reaction (combustion) to occur. As such, extinguishing agents are used for their ability to eliminate, separate or reduce one or more of these elements. For example, water reduces heat, carbon dioxide (CO₂) is used, primarily to reduce oxygen, foam is used to separate fuel from the oxygen and dry chemical powder will inhibit the chemical reaction.



There are six main types of extinguishers as follows:

Table 4.2 Types of extinguishers

| Type of extinguisher | Description of extinguishing agent |
|---|---|
| <p>Water</p>  | <p>Water.</p> <p>Water reduces the temperature below that required for ignition (ignition temperature).</p> <p>Water extinguishers may include corrosion inhibitors, freezing point depressants and/or wetting agents which prevent corrosion of the extinguisher cylinder, reduce the freezing point of the water, and improve the water's effectiveness in extinguishing fires, respectively.</p> |
| <p>Wet Chemical</p>  | <p>An aqueous solution, typically of alkali metal salts.</p> <p>This extinguishing agent reacts with the surface of the cooking oil or fat, creating a barrier which seals off the oxygen supply.</p> |




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| Type of extinguisher | Description of extinguishing agent |
|---|--|
| <p>Foam</p>  | <p>An aqueous solution of water and foam concentrate.</p> <p>This extinguishing agent acts by providing a layer of foam solution over the top of a fuel which excludes air. For Class A fires it also lowers their temperature.</p> <p>Two main types of foam are aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) and alcohol-resistant aqueous film-forming foam (commonly referred to as AR-AFFF or ATC (alcohol type concentrate) foam).</p> <p>AFFF is used on common flammable liquid fires involving petrol, oil or paint whereas AR-AFFF is used for polar solvents that mix with water (e.g. alcohol and acetone) as, unlike AFFF, AR-AFFF does not readily mix with such solvents.</p> <p>Fluorine free (F3) foam extinguishers are also now available. Please refer to the manufacturer's instruction as to whether they can be used for polar solvents.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>NOTE—There is increasing use of ethanol (ethyl alcohol) blended fuels in Australia such as E10 and E85—the number indicates the percentage of ethanol to petrol (e.g. E10 is 10% ethanol and 90% unleaded fuel). While AFFF is generally considered suitable for E10 fuels it is unlikely to be suitable for high ethanol fuels such as E85. Advice from extinguisher manufacturers should be sought on how to address high ethanol blended fuels.</p> </div> |
| <p>Powder</p>  | <p>The two most common types of powders are BE (usually based on sodium bicarbonate or potassium bicarbonate) and ABE (usually based on monoammonium phosphate).</p> <p>There are also special powders for metal fires, which may not be effective on other classes of fire.</p> <p>Powder physically absorbs fuel molecules into its surface and interrupts the combustion chemical reaction.</p> |

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| Type of extinguisher | Description of extinguishing agent |
|--|--|
| <p>Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)</p>  | <p>Carbon dioxide stored at high pressure in a liquid state.</p> <p>Carbon dioxide displaces air to produce an atmosphere deficient of oxygen to a level that will not allow combustion.</p> |
| <p>Vaporising Liquid</p> <p>BCF (Halon)</p>  <p>NAF-P-III</p>  | <p>Gas stored under pressure as a liquid.</p> <p>These vaporising liquids extinguish fires both physically (by cooling) and chemically (by interfering with the chemical process).</p> <p>Typical gases used include halon and halon replacements like FM-200 and NAF-P-III.</p> <p>Important</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is illegal to own a BCF (halon) extinguisher for anything other than an approved essential use (typically aviation, defence or maritime applications). If you have one of these extinguishers (identified by their, typically, full yellow cylinder as well as their labelling), you should surrender it to the National Halon Bank for disposal. For details, see http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/ozone/halon/halon-disposal. 2. Many of these gases are 'scheduled agents' which are subject to Commonwealth legislation which requires, among other things, a national licences to decant, charge or recharge extinguishers with such gases. One method for identifying if a gas is a scheduled agent is to check the Fire Protection Industry (ODS & SGG) Board fact sheet "Which extinguishing agents are scheduled?". |

NOTE—Except for carbon dioxide (CO₂) extinguishers, most extinguishers are pressurised using compressed air or nitrogen so that when the extinguisher is triggered the extinguishing agent is expelled from the extinguisher.

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4.3 Which extinguisher type to use on what class of fire

Determining the type of extinguisher to use on a particular class of fire should be undertaken by looking at the 'hazard' pictographs on the extinguisher cylinder. Green pictographs like those in Clause 4.1 indicate classes of fire the extinguisher can be used on. Conversely, similar pictographs with the image in black on a white background and within a red diagonal bar and border indicate classes of fire the extinguisher **must not** be used on (e.g. a water extinguisher must not be used on electrical equipment).



















Figure 2 Pictographs for prohibited use

The FPA Australia Portable Fire Extinguisher Guide provides general guidance on what type of first attack appliance (extinguisher, fire blanket or fire hose reel) is suitable for each class of fire:

Portable Fire Extinguisher Guide

T +61 3 8892 3131
F +61 3 8892 3132
E shop@fpaa.com.au
E technical@fpaa.com.au
W www.fpaa.com.au

Type of Fire, Class and Suitability

| Pre 1997 | Current | Extinguishing Agent | A Wood Paper Plastic | B Flammable & Combustible Liquids | C Flammable Gases | E Electrically Energised Equipment | F Cooking Oils and Fats | Comments | D Metal Fires |
|---|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
|  |  | Water | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | Dangerous if used on flammable liquid, energised electrical equipment and cooking oil/fat fires | Use only special purpose extinguishers and seek expert advice. |
|  |  | Wet Chemical | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | Dangerous if used on energised electrical equipment | |
|  |  | Foam ¹ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | LIMITED | Dangerous if used on energised electrical equipment ¹ Solvents such as alcohol or acetone mix with water and therefore require special foam | |
|  |  | Powder | (ABE) ✓ (BE) ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | Look carefully at the extinguisher to determine if it is a BE or ABE unit as the capability is different | |
|  |  | Carbon Dioxide | LIMITED | LIMITED | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | Not suitable for outdoor use or smouldering deep seated Class A Fires | |
|  |  | Vaporising Liquid | ✓ | LIMITED | LIMITED | ✓ | ✗ | Check the characteristics of the specific extinguishing agent. 5 Yearly servicing must be done by ODS & SGG licenced persons. | |
|  |  | Fire Blanket | LIMITED ² | LIMITED | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ² Fire blankets may be used to control a fire in clothes being worn by a person or as a thermal barrier against radiated heat. | |
|  |  | Fire Hose Reel | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | Dangerous if used on flammable liquid, energised electrical equipment and cooking oil/fat fires | |

LEGEND

✓ = the class or classes in which agent is most effective
✗ = not recommended for this class of fire
For more information go to: www.fpaa.com.au

LIMITED = Indicates the extinguishing agent is not the agent of choice for the class of fire, but it may have a limited extinguishing capability

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Figure 3 FPA Australia's Portable Fire Extinguisher Guide

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NOTE—The above Portable Fire Extinguisher Guide includes a “Pre-1997” column as the identification colour scheme changed with the 1997 edition of the AS 1841 series of Australian Standards for portable fire extinguisher. The colour scheme from the 1997 edition of the AS 1851 series has remained unchanged in the 2007 edition of the AS 1841 series.

4.4 Extinguisher classification and rating

While the portable fire extinguisher guide in 4.3 indicates which extinguisher type is suitable against certain classes of fire, it does not detail *how* effective an individual extinguisher is, i.e. its expected performance in extinguishing fire. This is identified by a combination of its classification and rating. This classification and rating is the result of extinguisher testing conducted in accordance with the relevant sections of AS/NZS 1850–2009, *Portable fire extinguishers - Classification, rating and performance testing*.

An extinguisher’s classification and rating is in the format:

$$[No.] A : [No.] B : C : D : E : [No.] F$$

The letters are the classification and indicate the class of fire an extinguisher is effective on. The numbers (No.) are the rating and relates to the fuel load of the test fire of that class (A, B or F*) that the extinguisher was capable of extinguishing.

*The tests for Class C, D and E differ and do not have a rating. See below table for further explanation.

Because there are multiple classes of fire, there is no one extinguisher that is suitable for them all. However, some extinguishers are available which are suitable for one, two or even three classes.

The following are some examples of classifications and ratings for extinguishers:

- A water extinguisher may be 3A
- A wet chemical extinguisher, 2A:4F
- An ABE type powder extinguisher, 2A:40B:E.

The possible classifications and ratings under AS/NZS 1850 are detailed in Table 4.4 on the following pages.

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Table 4.4 Extinguisher classification and rating

| Type of fire | Class of fire | Fuel used in test fire | Possible classifications and ratings | Notes |
|----------------------|---------------|---|--|--|
| Wood, paper, plastic | A | Wood | 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 6A or 10A | <p>The letter “A” indicates that the extinguisher is effective on class A fires.</p> <p>The numbers relate to the fuel load of the wooden crib used for the test fire, among other details. The higher the number, the greater the fuel load of the test fire.</p> |
| Flammable liquids | B | n-heptane or aliphatic hydrocarbon solvent | 2B, 5B, 10B, 20B, 30B, 40B, 60B or 80B | <p>The letter “B” indicates that the extinguisher is effective on class B fires.</p> <p>The numbers relate to the fuel load for the test fire, among other details. The higher the number, the greater the fuel load of the test fire.</p> |
| Flammable gases | C | Liquid propane gas | C | <p>The letter “C” indicates that the extinguisher is effective on class C fires.</p> <p>There is no rating associated with the “C” classification. The test simply determines whether the extinguisher is capable of extinguishing the liquid propane gas test fire (which is formed by adding a 2 m steel tube to the valve, opening the quick-acting valve and igniting the pipe end).</p> |
| Metal fires | D | Varies, generally only one specific combustible metal | D | <p>Different combustible metals need different specialised extinguishing agents to extinguish them. These are typically tested to international standards like UL 711.</p> <p>There is no rating</p> |

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| Type of fire | Class of fire | Fuel used in test fire | Possible classifications and ratings | Notes |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Energized electrical equipment | E | N/A (see notes) | E | Class E is not actually a class of fire—electricity does not burn—but rather identifies extinguishers suitable to be used on equipment that is electrically energised. As such, it is only used where the extinguisher has also achieved another classification (typically A, B or F). There is no rating. |
| Cooking oils and fats | F | Sunflower oil | 1F, 2F, 3F or 4F | The letter “F” indicates that the extinguisher is effective on class F fires. The numbers relate to the surface area of the pan or tray used in the test fire, among other details. The higher the number, the larger the test fire. |

4.4.1 What does a different rating mean?

While two extinguishers may have the same classification (i.e. be suitable for the same class of fire), they may have different ratings which indicate their effectiveness on that class of fire.

Example of rating

A fire occurs in a deep fat fryer.

These are two extinguishers—one extinguisher with a 1F classification and rating and one with a 4F classification and rating.

The 1F extinguisher was only capable of extinguishing a test fire with a surface area of 0.07m². As such, there may not be enough extinguishing agent to create a barrier on the surface of the oil or this barrier may be too thin and break up thus allowing the air supply through again and therefore allowing the fire to re-ignite.

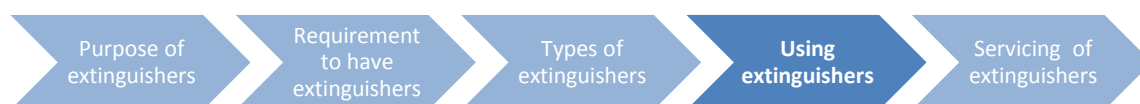
On the other hand, the 4F extinguisher was capable of extinguishing a test fire with a surface area of 0.5m² (a simulate of a deep fryer) and is therefore

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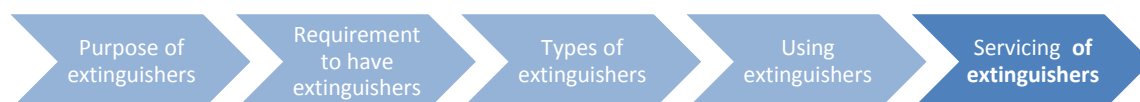
capable of creating a barrier on the surface of the oil which seals off the air supply and is thick enough that it does not break up and allow the fire to re-ignite.

5.0 How do I use an extinguisher?



Training in the use of extinguishers can be obtained from fire protection companies. There is also a nationally recognised unit of competency offered by various Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in demonstrating the use of extinguishers (as well as fire hose reels and fire blankets): *CPPFES2005A Demonstrate first attack firefighting equipment*.

6.0 Do I need to have my extinguisher serviced (maintained)?



Even if legislation does not specifically require routine servicing (maintenance) of portable fire extinguishers, FPA Australia recommends that extinguishers should still be routinely serviced as a duty of care to potential users. Where routine service of portable fire extinguishers is required by legislation, it is generally the same legislation that requires extinguishers to be installed.

Extinguishers should be routinely serviced so that they are capable of operating correctly when needed which is always the most critical time. Such routine servicing is achieved by regular services to confirm the extinguisher is in an operational condition. AS 1851 is the appropriate standard for routine servicing of portable fire extinguishers.

6.1 How often does my extinguisher need to be routinely serviced?

6.1.1 Standards

The legislation requiring servicing (maintenance) varies between the States and Territories as well as between the various applications (e.g. extinguishers

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in buildings, vehicles or vessels). To assist you with the relevant State and Territory requirements, refer to FPA Australia's Good Practice Guide (GPG-03) on the adoption and use of AS 1851-2012 for more information.

In most cases routine servicing is required to be conducted in accordance with the relevant edition of Australia Standard AS 1851:

- AS 1851-2012, *Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment*
- AS 1851-2005, *Maintenance of fire protection systems and equipment*
- or
- AS 1851.1-1995, *Maintenance of fire protection equipment - Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets.*

Where no servicing (maintenance) standard is specified by legislation, FPA Australia recommends that the servicing be conducted in accordance with the latest (2012) edition of AS 1851 as well as the manufacturer's instructions.

6.1.2 Frequency

The various editions of AS 1851 include service tasks for portable fire extinguishers at different frequencies. The frequency of these tasks is as follows:

Table 6.1.2 Frequency of fire extinguisher servicing

| AS 1851.1-1995 | AS 1851-2005 | AS 1851-2012 |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 6 monthly | 6 monthly | 6 monthly |
| Yearly | Yearly | Yearly |
| 3 yearly | 5 yearly | 5 Yearly |
| 6 yearly | | |

Please note that different tasks are required at each frequency. Therefore, for example, when a yearly service is conducted, the technician also conducts the 6-monthly service because the 6 monthly and yearly service routines have different tasks.

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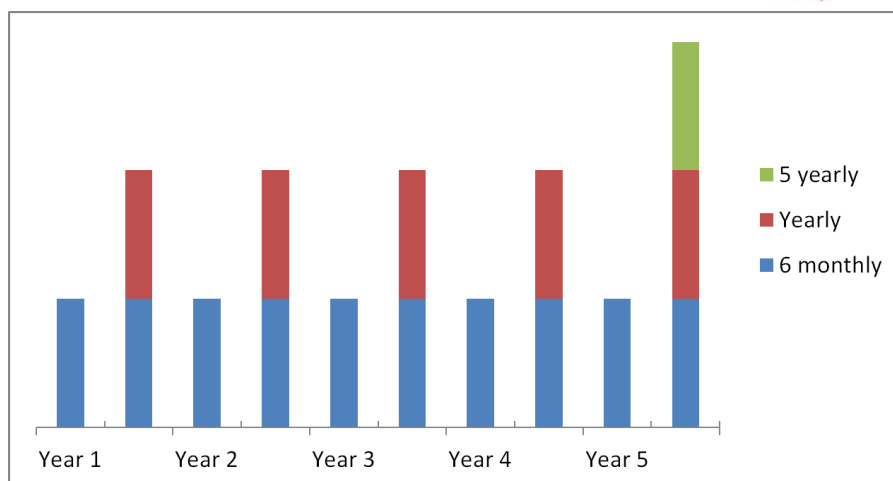


Figure 4 Illustration of service activities conducted in accordance with AS 1851-2012

IMPORTANT—In addition to the above, it should be noted that after an extinguisher is used it should be immediately arranged to have it recharged with extinguishing agent (or replaced) so that it is ready to be used again.

6.2 Who can service extinguishers?

Currently the only States that have legislated requirements for individuals or companies servicing portable fire extinguishers are Queensland and Tasmania:

- In Queensland, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC) requires licences in the class “Portable fire equipment and hose reels (hose reels down stream of stop cock only)” with the category “Inspect and test” for:
 - The company (Contractor’s licence)
 - A nominee supervisor for the company (Nominee supervisor licence)
 - and
 - Any technicians undertaking extinguisher servicing for the company (Occupational licence).

These licences require relevant qualifications with specific nationally recognised units of competency to be held.

- In Tasmania, under the General Fire Regulations 2010 Regulation 7 and 8, the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) requires anyone installing, maintaining or repairing fire protection equipment (including portable fire extinguishers) to hold a permit issued by the TFS.

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To obtain this permit, an individual needs to hold the specified nationally recognised units of competency.

Note: The requirements in Queensland and Tasmania only apply to servicing of fire protection systems and equipment in buildings. They do not apply to fire protection systems and equipment in vehicles or vessels or in structures not covered by building legislation and the Building Code of Australia.

In other States and Territories (and in situations not covered by the above mentioned requirements in Queensland and Tasmania), it is up to the person having their extinguishers serviced to satisfy themselves that the person servicing their extinguishers is suitably qualified.

To assist in identifying this, FPA Australia recommends (as does AS 1851) that technicians hold the relevant nationally recognised qualification with the applicable units of competency. For extinguisher servicing, this is Certificate II in Fire Protection Inspection and Testing or its predecessor—Certificate II in Asset Maintenance (Fire Protection Equipment)—with the units of competency relevant to the servicing of portable fire extinguishers.

To recognise individuals that hold this qualification, FPA Australia has implemented a voluntary Fire Protection Accreditation Scheme (FPAS). This scheme also recognises businesses that employ FPAS accredited technicians.

However, it should be recognised that it is not always possible to have someone who holds the relevant qualification (particularly in remote locations) and in such situations it is up to the person having their extinguishers serviced to satisfy themselves that the person is suitably experienced.

6.3 Service records

There are two types of service records for portable fire extinguishers:

- Tags and labels
and
- Summary records.

6.3.1 Tags and labels

Extinguishers are required to have tags or labels attached which are marked to show the level of service performed as follows:

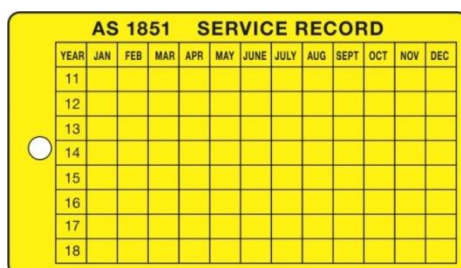
- 1 = 6-monthly service (a hole may be used instead of a “1” if serviced to AS 1851-1995 or AS 1851-2005)

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NOTE—In AS 1851-2012 a hole was changed to mean a 3-monthly service (not applicable to extinguishers) rather than a 6 monthly service. As such, FPA Australia recommends 6-monthly services should only be indicated using a “1” as this is compliant regardless of the edition of AS 1851 used.

- 2 = Yearly service
- 3 = 3-yearly service (only applies to AS 1851.1-1995, see 6.1.2)
- 4 = 5-yearly service
- 5 = Recharged after use

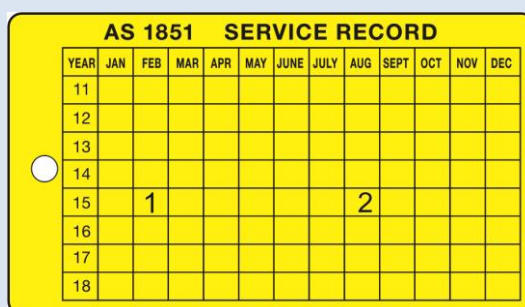


| AS 1851 SERVICE RECORD | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| YEAR | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 5 Sample tag

IMPORTANT—The tag or label simply indicates that a service has been undertaken. It is the summary record that provides detailed information, such as any defects or issues identified or service tasks not completed.

NOTE—As explained in 6.1.2, multiple services may be conducted at one time, as such, you may have a tag that has only one “1” and one “2” in a year (rather than two “1”s and one “2”) because the second six-monthly service was done at the same time as the yearly and therefore only the yearly (as the less frequent test) is marked. See example on the following page.



| AS 1851 SERVICE RECORD | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| YEAR | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | 1 | | | | | 2 | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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6.3.2 Summary records

In addition to the tag or label, a summary record is also required. This summarises what extinguishers have been serviced, what levels of service was conducted on each extinguisher and notes any defects or issues.

6.4 Other considerations when having your extinguishers routinely serviced

In addition to the information in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, there are a number of other matters to be aware of when having your extinguishers serviced:

- FPA Australia strongly recommends establishing an agreement with a competent and reputable company to service your portable fire extinguishers.
- Always check the identity of a service technician, even if they are wearing some type of uniform, and ensure they are from your regular service provider if you have one.
- Request that the service technician signs off all necessary documentation and ensure they explain what service work they are charging for. A reputable company should be happy to explain the work being charged for and provide appropriate customer service.
- If a service technician you have not dealt with before advises that an existing fire extinguisher is of the wrong type, request an explanation in writing and seek another opinion if not satisfied with the explanation.
- FPA Australia strongly recommends that any non fire brigade or Council officer making threats of fines or prosecution and/or anyone engaging in intimidating tactics be ordered to leave the premises immediately. Extinguisher servicing companies and their technicians have no authority to enforce legislation or make threat of fines or prosecution.

7.0 Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this correspondence reflect those of FPA Australia. However these are subject to change based on receipt of further information regarding the subject matter. You should interpret the technical opinion or information provided carefully and consider the context of how this opinion/information will be used in conjunction with the relevant requirements outlined in regulations (state and/or federal); standards, codes or specifications; certification; accreditation; manufacturer's documentation and advice; and any other relevant requirements, instructions or guidelines. FPA Australia does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy of the opinion/information provided, nor do they accept either directly or indirectly any liabilities, losses and damages arising from the use and application of this opinion/information.



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