Weekly Safety Tip

Quick Review on Fire Extinguishers at Home

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A fire extinguisher can be a critical tool in the event of a fire in your home, but not all Americans have easy access to one. Only about 70 percent own or have access to a fire extinguisher.

In a nutshell, consider these important safety tips:

➢ Purchase an ABC extinguisher that's been safety tested by a nationally recognized lab, which will work on most types of fire that occur in residential buildings.

➢ Get one for each floor of your home.

➢ Most fire extinguishers for the home are single-use only; you need to replace them after any use, no matter how short.

➢ Fire extinguishers that don't get used should be replaced after 12 years.

➢ Though rechargeable models exist, recharging after use makes more sense in industrial or professional environments, where their charge and maintenance are closely monitored by trained professionals.

The 5 Types of Fire Extinguishers and Their Uses. In the U.S.A., there are five classifications of fire extinguishers, with the last two — D and K extinguishers — typically used in factories and commercial kitchens, respectively.

Our focus is on the first three (below), A, B, and C, because these are the classifications most useful for residential fires.

Three Common Extinguisher Types
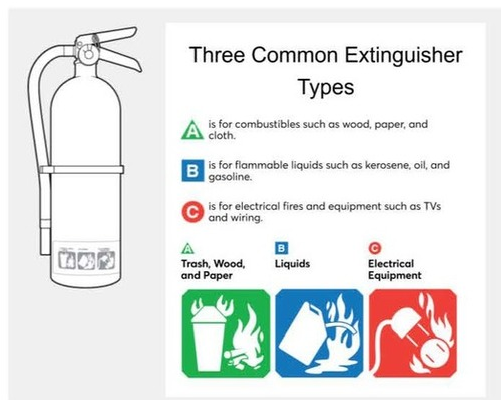
Class A fire extinguishers target fires generated from wood, paper, and textiles.

Class B fire extinguishers can extinguish fires fueled by oil, grease, and other flammable liquids or gases.

Class C fire extinguishers work on fires involving live electrical equipment.

ABC fire extinguishers work on all three types of fire and are the best for home use, including the kitchen, because they're more versatile and because you want to be able to fight a fire even if you don't know its origin.

The wrong type of fire extinguisher can actually make some fires worse.

When shopping for a fire extinguisher. Find one that's been certified by UL Solutions, CSA, FM Approvals, or ETL. These national laboratories ensure that the extinguisher is safe to use and that it puts out the types of fire it says it does.

Where to Put a Fire Extinguisher and How to Use It. You are going to want one fire extinguisher on each floor. The **kitchen is a good spot** for one because home cooking is the leading cause of house fires in the U.S. Place other fire extinguishers **in easy-to-reach areas, preferably near an exit**, so that you can grab and use one on your way out of the building. **Don't keep your extinguisher above the stove or near a furnace** because those areas are more likely to be difficult to access in the event of a fire. Also, **an extinguisher should not be kept under the sink** because the moisture can damage it.

Using a fire extinguisher is fairly simple, if you can remember the acronym **P-A-S-S**:

> *Pull* the pin - *Aim* at the base of the fire - *Squeeze* the lever or handle - *Sweep* from side to side.

Aim carefully, because the amount of fire retardant within an extinguisher is limited, and you want to make sure you have enough to douse the fire, if possible. Still, don't get too close, **staying about 6 to 8 feet away** from the fire. Spraying a grease fire, for example, could cause the grease to splatter, potentially spreading the fire more and causing burns.

And, **don't test it**… Any discharge of an extinguisher, no matter how short, immediately reduces the pressure within and allows any remaining pressure to leak out, making it extinguisher pretty much useless in an emergency. **Inspect them monthly** to make sure that the pressure is still in the "**GREEN** range" and that each piece of it is in the correct place.

David A. Varwig, CSP-retired and Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of the Safety Council of Northwest Ohio

Weekly Safety Share

SAFETY SHARE

Special Share for SCNWO Safety Practitioners

Analysis of survey data from a recent study on the *impact of implementing ISO 45001* revealed a *disturbing correlation between the reporting lines for occupational safety and health (OSH) functions and workplace fatality rates*.

Organizations where the OSH reporting structure was integrated within the Human Resources (HR) department or had OSH reporting directly to a chief human resources officer or chief people officer exhibited a higher level of workplace fatalities compared to those with alternate reporting structures… (See graph below)
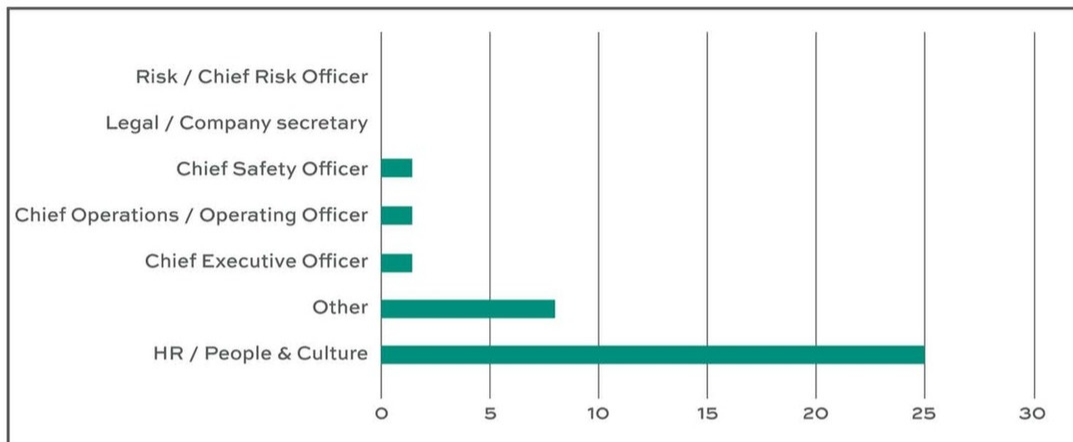
The study's **conclusion** was that this finding underscores the importance of exploring the organizational dynamics and communication channels within companies concerning safety management.

(Not sure that there is much you can do with that statement, so please read on . . . DaveV)

For Your Consideration:

*Over 5 decades in Safety, I spent much of it under **Corporate Personnel** (now known as **HR,** Human Resources).*

Also, I had the good fortune to often report directly to or be so matrixed to the sr. manager or executive leader, which of course works much better, but can't recall ever being actually 'asked' if I wanted to do that.

My experience in reporting directly to facility operations management (though often much more challenging) afforded this safety practitioner a better ability to influence safe work performance than being in a support organization like HR.

*So, **if you ever are given the choice** of which group to work under, you can have greater influence in Operations / Production than under HR, so long as you have a strong backbone to stand your ground -- to earn their respect and gain the confidence of operational leadership.*

Source: Enhancing OSH Performance: The Impact of ISO 45001 Andrew Lewis | andylewis9380@outlook.com University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, London, UK

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