

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Learn how and when to use a fire extinguisher

Do you have a fire extinguisher in your home? And as importantly, do you know how to use one?

What good is a fire extinguisher if you don't actually know how to use it? Unfortunately, most people don't know how to use them and are unclear about what they should actually be used for.

An extinguisher simply does not have the power to put out a large fire. Rather, an extinguisher is meant for putting out and controlling smaller fires before they develop into a larger and more dangerous one.

"Always place fire extinguishers in areas where they are easily accessible," says Wayne Ross, an insurance expert with Aviva Canada. "Put them in locations where a risk of a fire is the greatest."

How to use a fire extinguisher

If a situation ever arises where a fire extinguisher is required, homeowners can use the simple acronym PASS to guide them in how to use it properly, as follows:

- Pull: The first step is to pull the pin. This will allow you to squeeze the handle.

- Aim: Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.

- Squeeze: Squeeze the handle to spray. You have about 30 seconds, so make it count.

- Sweep: While spraying, move (or sweep) back and forth, aiming at the base of the fire.

Fire extinguisher maintenance

How often a fire extinguisher needs to be changed depends on the type of extinguisher you have. In a general sense, a fire extinguisher lasts between five to 15 years. However, you should check your gauges on a yearly basis. If you are not sure if it needs to be replaced, have a professional take a look at it.

Understanding how and when to use a fire extinguisher can be the difference between putting out a small fire and having to call the fire department.

More detailed information is available from your insurance broker or at AvivaCanada.com.

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