

# Disasters and Food Safety

## Kitchen Fire Extinguishers



Fire! Where's the fire extinguisher? Knowing where a fire extinguisher is and how to use it is essential for food and kitchen safety. Be prepared by purchasing the right type of extinguisher and knowing how to store, use, and inspect it properly.

### Types

The type of fire an extinguisher can put out is based on a letter system, as seen in the table below.

Multipurpose fire extinguishers may be labeled with a combination of letters such as B-C or A-B-C. Common household extinguishers are labeled 'ABC.'

Most kitchen fires involve grease. A fire extinguisher with only a class A label will not work on a grease fire. Make sure fire extinguishers for the kitchen are labeled with B or K.

All fire extinguishers should have a seal that indicates an independent testing laboratory has tested them. Often, the seal is a UL label.

Type of Fire Extinguisher	Best Used For	Use In
A	Cloth, wood, and paper	Homes and businesses
B	Combustible and flammable liquids, such as grease, oil, and oil-based paints	Homes and businesses
C	Plugged-in electrical equipment, such as appliances and tools	Homes and businesses
D	Flammable metals	Factories
K	Vegetable oils, animal oils, and fats in cooking appliances	Commercial kitchens, restaurants, cafeterias, and catering businesses

Source: [usfa.fema.gov](https://usfa.fema.gov), U.S. Fire Administration.



## Extinguisher Size

Choose a fire extinguisher that is large enough for a small fire but not heavy. For home use, a 5-pound fire extinguisher is generally recommended.

## Installation and Storage

Install fire extinguishers close to exits, and keep them at least 30 feet from the stove, if possible.

Do not store your fire extinguisher in a cabinet or a hard-to-reach place in the kitchen. In an emergency, it should be easy to grab.

## Using a Fire Extinguisher

- (P) Pull the pin.
- (A) Aim the nozzle low towards the base of the fire, standing at least 6 feet from the fire.
- (S) Squeeze the lever slowly and hold it.
- (S) Sweep the nozzle from side to side while moving toward the fire.

If the fire does not go out immediately, leave the area. Call the fire department anytime you need to use a fire extinguisher.

## Call Your Local Office

Contact your local Illinois Extension office with your food safety questions: [go.illinois.edu/FindILExtension](https://go.illinois.edu/FindILExtension).

## Resources

- [Cooking Safety](#), National Fire Protection Association.
- [Choosing and Using a Fire Extinguisher](#), U.S. Fire Administration.

## Monthly Inspection

Inspect the fire extinguisher once a month.

- Check the extinguisher's pressure gauge to ensure it's still in a safe operating range.
- Inspect the hoses and nozzles for physical damage and check for rust or dents. Clean the outside to remove dust or grease.
- Lift the extinguisher to make sure it is full. If it is light, it may leak.
- Shake chemical extinguishers monthly to prevent the chemicals within from solidifying and settling. Read the label on the extinguisher.
- Check the label or attached tag for an expiration date. According to National Fire Protection Association standards, rechargeable fire extinguishers are good for 6 years, and disposable fire extinguishers are good for 12 years.

Modified March 2025



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

[extension.illinois.edu](https://extension.illinois.edu)