

**Portable fire extinguishers****OAR 437  
Division 2/L****Fire Protection**

There may be a number of reasons why your employer or your business has portable fire extinguishers. They may be required by your insurance carrier or the local fire authority, or Oregon OSHA has a rule that requires them. If you have portable fire extinguishers, Oregon OSHA's Portable Fire Extinguisher rules apply. (OAR 437-002-0187)

The fire extinguisher rules require that you properly select and place the extinguishers, that you inspect and maintain them, that hydrostatic testing is performed according to Table 3 in the rule, and that employees be trained on their use. If you are complying with these requirements, most employers need not do anything else.

Some employers may choose to comply differently based on their set of circumstances.

**1) Total Employee Evacuation/Extinguishers Not Accessible**

If you have fire extinguishers, but they are not accessible (in a locked cabinet) and you do not allow employees to use them you are exempt from OAR 437-002-0187. For you to be exempt, you must have a written fire safety policy that requires an immediate evacuation of employees. You must also have a written Emergency Action plan (OAR 437-002-0042) if you have more than 10 employees (plan does not have to be written if you have 10 or fewer employees) that identifies:

- Emergency evacuation procedures,
- Evacuation routes and assignments,
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation,
- Procedures for reporting the fire or emergency,
- Procedures for shutting down critical equipment,
- Rescue and medical duties, and
- Names and job titles of employee contacts.

You must also have a fire prevention plan that contains:

- A list of major fire hazards, handling, and storage procedures for hazardous materials
- A list of potential ignition sources and control procedures,
- The type of fire equipment necessary to control the hazard,
- Names or job titles of person responsible for maintaining the equipment,
- Procedures to control accumulations of flammable and combustible waste, and
- Maintenance procedures for heat-producing equipment to prevent accidental ignition of combustible materials.(OAR 437-002-0043)

**2) Total employee evacuation/Extinguishers Accessible But Not Used**

If your extinguishers are accessible but your policy is that employees not use them you must have an Emergency Action Plan (OAR 437-002-0042) and a fire prevention plan (OAR 437-002-0043) but you do not need to train your employees on the use of extinguishers.

You must comply with all other requirements of OAR 437-002-0187.

**3) Evacuation of Some Employees/Extinguishers Used by Designated Employees**

If you have extinguishers and you designate certain employees to use them, you must have an Emergency Action Plan for those employees required to evacuate.

You must comply with all the requirements of OAR 437-002-0187 including training those employees who are designated to use the extinguishers.

**4) Any or All Employees May Use the Extinguishers**

If you intend that all of the employees be allowed to use the extinguishers you must meet all of the requirements of OAR 437-002-0187.

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## Fire Extinguisher Selection and Distribution

Employers must mount, locate, and identify extinguishers for easy employee access. Do not obstruct or obscure them from view. Indicate the location of the extinguisher. Employees must be able to find them and use them without being exposed to injury. Select and distribute (place) fire extinguishers based on the class of anticipated workplace fires. Fire extinguishers are classified by their ability to handle specific classes and sizes of fires.

**Class A** – ordinary combustible fire; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 75 feet or less.

**Class B** – flammable liquid and gas fires; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 50 feet or less.

**Class C** – electrical fires; usually Class A or Class B fires involving energized electrical wiring and equipment. Travel distance based on the burning fuel source (flammable or combustible).

**Class D** – combustible metals; travel distance for employees to extinguisher is 75 feet or less.

## Extinguisher Inspection, Maintenance, and Testing

Employers are responsible for the inspection, maintenance, and testing of portable fire extinguishers. Employers must ensure that fire extinguishers are fully charged, operable, and kept in their designated place at all times; employers must provide equivalent protection when extinguishers are removed for maintenance or recharging.



- Ensure annual maintenance checks are conducted by a person trained to recognize problems.
- Record annual maintenance date. Retain records for one year after the last entry or for the extinguisher shell life.
- Conduct external visual inspections monthly.
- Have trained persons with suitable testing equipment and facilities conduct hydrostatic testing based on 2/L requirements.
- Remove extinguishers that fail hydrostatic pressure testing.

## Employee Training

Employers must provide training upon initial assignment and at least annually for employees who use fire extinguishers. A training program must familiarize employees with the general principles of fire extinguisher use, fire hazards, and the use of appropriate equipment.

Training may also include controlled fires (check with local authorities) to train employees in the proper use of extinguishers. Employees should be taught to sound the alarm and when to evacuate and call the fire department.

## Emergency-Exit Requirements

Every workplace must have enough exits suitably located to enable everyone to evacuate the facility safely during an emergency. Considerations include the type of structure, the number of persons exposed, the fire protection available, the type of industry involved, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure. Fire doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside. Exit routes from buildings must be free of obstructions, have adequate lighting, and be properly marked with exit signs. See OAR 437-002-0041, **Exits and Exit Routes**.

## Resources

The full text of Oregon OSHA rules is on our Web site, [www.osha.org](http://www.osha.org), Rules/laws. Fire Protection requirements outside of Division 2/L, General Industry, are also found on our Web site.

### Related resource links

[www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable.html)

[www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/fixed.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/fixed.html)

[www.dol.gov/elaws/fire.htm](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/fire.htm)

[www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/pdf/workshops/212i.pdf](http://www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/pdf/workshops/212i.pdf)

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/business.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/business.html)



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