Vacaville Fire Department Prevention Bureau
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Know When to Use One

Owning a portable fire extinguisher is important, but only if you know how to use it properly. A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives on scene. Portable fire extinguishers can be very effective, but they do have limitations. Most importantly, they are not designed to fight large fires or fires that are spreading quickly.

Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind about the safe use of portable fire extinguishers:

- Only use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area.

- Before using a fire extinguisher make sure everyone has left the building and that someone has called 9-1-1.

- A fire extinguisher should not be used if a room is filled with smoke; breathing smoke can be very harmful.

- A multi-purpose fire extinguisher should be selected for home use.

- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher. Become familiar with the use of the extinguisher <u>before</u> a fire happens.

- Fire extinguishers should be installed close to an escape route and away from stoves and heating appliances. A fire extinguisher should only be used on a stove top fire after an attempt has been made to extinguish the fire by first placing a lid over the pan and then turning the burner off. If the fire continues, then a fire extinguisher should be used if safety permits.

- Keep a clear path between you, the fire and an exit.

- Know when to escape. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary plan is to escape safely and call 9-1-1.

- Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke detectors. Make sure all members of the family are familiar with the escape plan. It is also prudent for family members to rehearse the escape plan before an emergency event takes place.