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**Topic:** Security & Safety  
**Suggested Title:** The Importance of Fire Extinguishers  
**Words:** 550

The association strongly encourages residents to keep at least one, and preferably several, fire extinguishers in your home. Fire extinguishers reduce the potential for damage which keeps our insurance premiums—and your assessments—down. Several types are available, and each has a specific use.

#### **How Many?**

Common household fire extinguishers are only intended to snuff out small fires before they become serious. Keep as many as necessary to grab quickly before a fire gets out of control. For starters, you should probably have one in the kitchen, at least one on each floor, one in the garage, and one near valuable electronic equipment.

#### **What Type?**

The kind of fire extinguisher you should use depends on what's burning. Different types of extinguishers are available for different types of fires, and each is prominently labeled with an alpha designation:

**Class A fires: paper, wood, cardboard.** If household items like cardboard, fabric, or wood (a sofa, for example) are on fire, water will do the best job of putting it out. This is a class A fire, and extinguishers containing water are labeled with an "A." Water is useful *only* on class A fires, and actually can be dangerous on other types of fires: water spreads grease fires and conducts electricity in an electrical fire.

Newer A-type extinguishers are available that spray a fine mist of water, which is safer (less likely to conduct electricity) and causes less damage to documents or books. Water mist extinguishers are appropriate for a home office or home library.

**Class B fires: gasoline, kerosene, grease, oil, and other combustible liquids.** This type of fire is common in the garage or kitchen, and you should use an extinguisher labeled B or BC. Most contain dry chemicals similar to bicarbonate of soda (a great all-purpose kitchen fire extinguisher) in a pressurized foam base. Others contain Halon (older models) or Halotron.

**Class C fires: electrical equipment.** Bicarbonate type (BC) extinguishers are also useful for electrical fires. But don't confuse electrical with *electronic* fires—you probably don't want chemical foam on your computer or entertainment components. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) extinguishers are also labeled BC, and these are probably better for extinguishing fires on or near electronic or other delicate equipment.

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Halon is great for electronic fires, but if you're concerned about the ozone layer, you might prefer the more environmentally friendly Halotron. Keep the Halotron extinguisher near the computer or your entertainment electronics—it won't cause any damage if it's used on any of these—or in the kitchen to use on grease or electrical fires.

#### **What Does the Number Mean?**

Along with the alpha designations listed above, fire extinguishers also have a number. This indicates how much fire the extinguisher can handle---higher numbers put out bigger fires. However, bigger isn't always better. Large extinguishers are more difficult to handle and can only be used by one person at a time. If you feel you need added coverage, stock several smaller extinguishers rather than just one large one.

#### **The All-Purpose Problem**

Fire extinguishers labeled ABC will handle all classes of fire, and they would seem to eliminate the question, "What type do I need?" But the all-purpose extinguisher has some disadvantages. They're usually large and hard to handle, they contain chemicals that can corrode aluminum and damage electrical systems, and they leave a messy yellow residue.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

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Topic: Security/Safety  
Suggested title: Preparing for, Recovering from Fires  
Words: 258

Everyone in our community should prepare themselves for the risk of fire (not just wildfires). Drought conditions persist across the country and many of our homes are in or near woodland settings. Wildfires in California and other places across the country and single home fires remind us to be prepared.

The association urges all residents to create an emergency contact system so you have a place where you or your family members can call or log into remotely for information. Plan multiple escape routes from your home and out of the community in case one way is blocked. Make sure your insurance coverage is adequate; take a detailed inventory of your home.

There may also be simple steps you can take to make your home less vulnerable. Check with our local fire department to see what you can do. Simple things such as keeping trees and bushes far enough away from your home, ensuring shrubs near your home are regularly watered and installing dual-paned or tempered glass windows can help.

If our association ever experiences such a disaster, it will face tough times and difficult decisions just like you. It's the responsibility of the association manager and board members to make sure community standards are upheld when rebuilding, which will require adhering to the community's governing documents. We may bring in a third-party architect and attorney to help you rebuild in accordance with those documents.

Check for more tips on fire safety from the U.S. Fire Administration and other government organizations at [www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/index.shtm](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/index.shtm) and [www.firesafety.gov/](http://www.firesafety.gov/).

Are you ready?

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**Topic: Security/Safety**  
**Suggested title: Keep Warm, but Safe**  
**Words: 360**

December, January and February are the deadliest months for home fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). And, heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires and home fire deaths. That's why it's important for you and your loved ones to take extra precautions during the winter.

Thinking of buying a space heater? The NFPA recommends (and our association insists) that you make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory. Install it according to the manufacturer's instructions or have it professionally installed. If you have an electric-powered space heater, plug it into an outlet with sufficient capacity. Never use an extension cord. The association does not allow liquid-fueled space heaters.

Turn off space heaters whenever the room is unoccupied or when manufacturer's instructions say they should be turned off. Portable space heaters are easy to knock over in the dark. Turn them off when you go to bed, or at least make sure they're placed in lighted areas or out of high-traffic areas.

If you use a fireplace or wood stove, use only dry, seasoned wood to avoid the build-up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home-heating fires. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.

Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. After the ashes are cool, dispose of them in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from your home.

Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent. This is to make sure deadly carbon monoxide does not build up in the home

Other reminders from the National Fire Protection Association include:

- Don't use your oven to heat your home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually, and clean as necessary.
- Test smoke alarms monthly; install a carbon monoxide alarm outside each sleeping area.

For more information, visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).