

5.4 PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

BCA: E1.6
Reference: AS 2444

PURPOSE

Portable fire extinguishers provide occupants with an appliance with which to attack a fire in its initial stages.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE EQUIPMENT

Fire extinguishers must contain an extinguishing agent suitable for the fire hazard likely to be encountered. Fire extinguishers complying with Australian Standards are marked with a fire classification and rating, determined in accordance with AS/NZS 1850, which indicates the class and size of fire for which they have been successfully tested.

Each extinguisher must be located in the approved location that must be a conspicuous and readily accessible position. AS 2444 sets out the types and locations required for portable fire extinguishers, the locations being indicated by the appropriate signage.

METHOD OF OPERATION

A fire extinguisher is put into operation by transporting the extinguisher close to the fire and following the operating instructions clearly displayed on the extinguisher.

It is essential that all staff members are suitably trained in the correct use of fire extinguishers located on the premises.

MAINTENANCE CHECKS

It is recommended that the relevant building surveyor should require that fire extinguishers be maintained six-monthly to AS 1851-2005 Section 15. It should be noted that this is the lowest level of maintenance routines required by AS 1851-2005. More rigorous routines are also required and are outlined below. The owner may delegate this function to another person or body where necessary or appropriate.

The intervals of inspection and service are detailed in AS 1851-2005 Section 15:–

- Six-monthly
- Yearly
- Five-yearly
- After use of the extinguisher

A comprehensive maintenance schedule is detailed in AS 1851-2005 Section 15 for all types of fire extinguishers. All maintenance work must be carried out by experienced personnel, observing recognised safety procedures.

MAINTENANCE RECORDS

For the purpose of maintaining service records, clause 15.2.15 in AS 1851-2005 outlines:–

- a) Each extinguisher in the premises must have a unique site identification mark.
- b) If more than 10 extinguishers are located in or on the premises, a site plan showing the location of each extinguisher and its identification, type, size and rating, must be provided.
- c) A maintenance record tag must be attached to each extinguisher.
- d) A report on the correct provision and location of extinguishers must be provided by the service agency or personnel.

It is recommended that log sheets to record the completion of the maintenance are developed from the tables for portable fire extinguishers as specified in AS 1851-2005 Section 15.