



# GEAR UP FOR SAFETY AND RECLAIM YOUR PEACE OF MIND: HOW TO PROPERLY MAINTAIN AND OPERATE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

By Payam Lavi



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**E**asy and quick access to a working fire extinguisher, and knowing how to properly use it, can make the difference between life and death, or preserving property and watching a home, along with everything in it, go up in smoke, down in flames, and be reduced to ash and rubble.

A fire extinguisher is a relatively inexpensive and simple-to-operate piece of equipment. The problem is that too many people believe that they know how to operate a fire extinguisher when they actually might not.

The first step is ensuring the extinguisher is in working condition. A family should inspect their extinguisher once a month to ensure that the extinguisher is fully charged and in working condition.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHER CHECK LIST

### GAUGE

- **Green Myth:** Gauge on green is **not** a guarantee the extinguisher will work.

The red/green gauge measures only the pressure of the nitrogen gas but does not reveal if the chemical compound is dried out. It is not uncommon for extinguishers to malfunction after sitting for years without any maintenance. It is recommended that home extinguishers are properly serviced annually, or at least every two years, and yearly for businesses.

### PIN AND SAFETY SEAL:

- It is important to ensure that the pin and safety seal are in place and not bent or damaged.

### CORROSION/RUST:

- Should not be present anywhere on the extinguisher. Most importantly, inspect to ensure that there is no obvious or physical damage or condition to prevent operation.

### ACCESS:

- During a kitchen fire is no time to ask oneself, "Now where did I put that fire extinguisher?" Extinguishers should be accessible either on the counter or wall mounted, somewhere that you can get to it easily when needed.

### REMOVAL FROM MOUNT OR COUNTER:

- Grab the bottom of the extinguisher with one hand and the bottom handle with your other hand. Grabbing the handle by both the top and bottom may cause the chemical agent to discharge if the safety pin is broken. On the other hand, pressure on both handles at the same time will turn the handles into a pair of pliers, squeezing the safety pin and preventing it from being removed.

So now you have the fire extinguisher in your hands and are ready to show that grease fire who's the boss. Before aiming and pulling the trigger, the first step is to remove the safety pin by pulling the safety pin, right? Not exactly! Before you pull the safety pin, the extinguisher operator must think Chubby Checker, and do "The Twist."

At a Fire Service Day event a few years ago, I volunteered at the CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) booth. Only two people out of 100 were able to successfully break the safety seal by pulling the pin instead of twisting and pulling it first. The TPASS® process works on the majority of portable fire extinguishers.

The cost of any style of extinguisher pales in comparison to the price we pay for not having a maintained, easily accessible extinguisher, and knowing how to **TPASS** ®.

Alternative fire safety solutions are also available for homes with children, pets, the elderly, and those with weak or arthritic hands.

So, stay informed, gear up for safety, and maintain the peace of mind you well deserve!

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**FIRE EXTINGUISHER  
OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS**  
[www.LearnTPASS.com](http://www.LearnTPASS.com)

**The TWIST That Saves Lives™**

**T** **TWIST** pin to break the safety seal and unlock the Extinguisher.



**P** **PULL** out the safety pin from the Extinguisher.



**A** **AIM** at the base (bottom) of the fire and stand 6 to 8 feet away.



**S** **SQUEEZE** the lever to discharge the extinguishing agent.



**S** **SWEEP** the nozzle from side to side until the flames are totally extinguished.

