

Recommended Residential Fire Extinguishers

Compiled by Carl Wahl (10/2020-2/2021)

Always call 911 before attempting any fire suppression.

Fire classes, extinguisher numerical values, and what you should know about them:

There are five fire classes, but these are the most common:

Class A: Fires caused by ordinary combustibles like wood, vegetation, paper, and trash. If the end product is ash, it's a Class A type fire. They are normally extinguished by either water or ammonium phosphate.

Class B: Fires caused by flammable liquids or gas. Examples: oil, paints, kerosene, gasoline. This class does not include cooking oils. (Class B rated extinguishers can *usually* suppress the typical small home cooking fire.)

Class C: Fires caused by electrically energized equipment. Examples: Downed power lines, transformers, motors, overloaded house wiring, and overloaded surge protectors. Basically, stuff that can electrocute you.

All fire extinguishers have a numerical rating associated with each of these three classes. That number translates into the amount of fire suppression the extinguisher can deliver for each class.

Example: The spec on a 10 lb. Class ABC fire extinguisher is stated as 4-A; 80-B;C. What does that mean?

The number before the "A" indicates the equivalent amount of water the extinguisher can extinguish in multiples of 1.25 gallons. The above extinguisher rated 4-A therefore has the extinguishing capability of 1.25 x 4 gallons of water—or 5 gallons.

The number before either a "B" or "C" indicates the number of square feet of fire the extinguisher can put out. The above extinguisher rated at 80-B;C can therefore extinguish a electrical fire or, say, an oil fire, covering an 80 sq. ft. area.

Weight: A fire extinguisher's weight refers to the net weight of the active ingredient. It does not include the weight of the empty extinguisher tank. For example, a typical residential 10 lb. ABC fire extinguisher weighs around 19-20 lbs.

The main criteria used in compiling this extinguisher recommended list were:

- Dependability/reliability
- Portability (which dictates an extinguisher that's manageable and not too heavy)
- Sufficient discharge time

- Sufficient range (to allow one to use an extinguisher without being dangerously close to flames or radiant heat)
- Favorable reviews
- Good warranty
- Refillable on site (applies only to water and water mist extinguishers)

All dry chemical extinguishers should be mixed at least several times by inversion about once every two months to avoid “caking” of the agent.

All dry chemical extinguishers leave a messy residue.

All the below fire extinguishers are capable of being recharged.

Recommended fire extinguishers for exterior home use:

1. The 20 lb. Amerex 240 water fire extinguisher.

This extinguisher will only extinguish spot Class A fires up to a total of about 2.5 sq. ft. UL rated 2A.

Weight: 27.6 lbs.

Discharge time: 55 sec

Range: 45-55 ft.

Fill the tank with water and pressurize it to 100 psi with air using almost any air compressor. (You need not fill a water extinguisher to its maximum capacity. One can reduce the weight and maintain high pressure longer by reducing the amount of water.)



2. If you instead desire an ABC dry chemical extinguisher, **the Amerex A411 20 lb. ABC Dry Chemical Extinguisher** is recommended:

UL rated 10A:120B:C

Weight: 38 lbs.

Discharge time: 30 sec.

Range: 15-21 ft



3. If a lighter version of the Amerex A411 is needed, **the 10-lb. Amerex B441** is recommended:

UL rated 4A; 80B:C

Weight: 19 lbs.

Discharge time: 20 sec.

Range: 15-21 ft.



Recommended fire extinguishers for interior home use:

To pressurize the two water mist extinguishers shown below (with nitrogen or air), one must use a special fill adapter, Amerex Part # 09492. As of 2/2021, this part is sold separately and costs around \$54-58. (However, some local fire equipment suppliers may pressurize these cylinders for free.)

To achieve the Class C rating for water mist extinguishers, one must fill the tank with either deionized or distilled water.

1. The 1.75 gallon Amerex B270NM Water Mist extinguisher:

UL rated 2 A:C

Weight 21 lbs.

Discharge time: 72 sec.

Range: 10-12 ft.



2. Space and weight permitting, a better choice and value (less than \$10 more) is **the Amerex B272NM - 2.5 gallon Water Mist Fire Extinguisher:**

UL rated 2A:C (same as the B270NM due to “rounding off” of the spec. numbers)

Weight: 28 lbs.

Discharge time: 80 sec.

Range: 10-12 ft.





Only if a 5-lb. size cannot be accommodated, the 2.5 lb. Class ABC **Amerex B417** is recommended:

The B417 will only extinguish a spot Class A fire of about 1 sq. ft.

UL rated 1A; 10B:C

Weight: 5.5 lbs.

Discharge time: 10 sec.

Range: 9-15 ft.

