**Fire Extinguishers**

How successfully you control a fire depends on how quickly you get to your fire extinguisher, your ability to operate it, and the kind of fire extinguisher. Extinguishers are classified according to the type of fire they are designed to fight. The classifications are:

I) ***Class A*** fires which involve paper, wood, and cloth. A water extinguisher is recommended for this type of fire. It is operated by pulling a locking pin and squeezing a lever while aiming the nozzle at the base of the fire. Because water conducts electricity, don't use a water extinguisher to put out a fire involving electrical equipment. This extinguisher will be labeled with a capital A in a green triangle.

2) ***Class B*** fires involve flammable liquids and gases such as frying pan grease, gasoline, and oil. A liquefied gas extinguisher that contains either carbon dioxide gas or a gas called Halon is used for Class B fires. By squeezing a handle. the liquid in the extinguisher is changed into a gas that flows out covering the fire. It leaves no water or powder residue. This extinguisher will be labeled with a capital B in a red square; it can also be used to fight Class C fires.

3) ***Class C*** fires involve electrical equipment such as faulty wiring in a television set, motors, switches, etc. Dry chemical extinguishers are best for this type of fire although a liquefied gas extinguisher would also be effective. The dry chemical extinguisher contains a chemical powder and a gas under pressure. The operator opens a valve or punctures a gas cartridge attached to the extinguisher that expels the chemical. The heat from the fire changes the chemical to carbon dioxide that puts out the fire. The labeling symbol for this extinguisher is a capital C in a blue circle. It can be used on Class B fires also.

4) A fourth classification of fire, ***Class D***, is one you are not likely to encounter. It involves flammable metals and needs a special fire extinguisher.

Multipurpose dry chemical extinguishers can be used against A, B, and C type fires. These could be your best buy, however the dry chemical leaves a residue that must be removed after the fire is out.

**Fire Fighting Strength**

Fire extinguishers also are classified according to the size of the fire they can extinguish. Numbers from I to 10 appear before the classification letters to tell you their approximate strength. For example, a 5-A on an extinguisher tells you it can fight a fire only half as large as an extinguisher with a 10-A rating.

As a general rule. if you decide on a combination ABC type of extinguisher, be sure the A is rated with at least a 2 and the BC is rated with a 10. If you decide to buy two fire extinguishers - A and BC - the former should have at least a 2-A rating the latter should have a minimum strength of 5-BC.

**Location**

Locate a fire extinguisher near a room exit and in a visible place where every member of the family expected to use it can reach it quickly. Keep it inaccessible to small children.

Learn all you can about how the unit operates and make certain each member of the family understands its use. Check the maintenance directions and have it ready for use on a few seconds notice.

Almost all fire extinguishers will discharge completely in about I 0 seconds. If the fire is not out by that time, leave the house closing the door behind you and wait for the fire fighters to arrive.

***NOTE: Smoke detectors are the most effective life-saving tool for fires. Always maintain working smoke detectors and change batteries every six months. DO NOT attempt to extinguish a fire before ensuring the safety of your family and yourself!***