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METROPOLITAN EDUCATION DISTRICT

MetroED Employee Safety Newsletter



How to Use a Hand Held Fire Extinguisher

Fire can spread with lightning speed, consuming everything in its path and threatening lives and properties. Handheld fire extinguishers stop fire in its tracks, preventing small fires from becoming large ones. Knowing how to safely operate a handheld fire extinguisher leaves you better prepared for a fire-related emergency and may greatly reduce damage.

Remember PASS

Stand roughly 8 feet from the fire and hold the extinguisher in one hand. Make sure you have an escape route that you can easily access without heading past the fire.

Pull the pin on the fire extinguisher to release the handle. Toss the pin aside.

Aim the hose of the extinguisher at the base of the fire, not at the smoke or flames.

Squeeze the handle firmly.

Sweep the contents of the extinguisher back and forth across the base of the fire, maintaining even pressure on the handle.

Stop spraying the extinguisher once the fire has gone out and call 911 for help if needed.

It takes about one minute to fully empty the average fire extinguisher. Don't continue emptying the extinguisher once the fire is out, however, as you are left with no firefighting material if the flames were to reignite.

Know your fire extinguisher types. Class A units are designed for paper, cloth and plastic, while Class B fights oil and grease fires. Class C is for electrical fires only, while Class K is designed for use in the kitchen. Some models can be used for more than one class, but always read the tags and familiarize yourself with the extinguishers at home and work so you're ready if a fire breaks out.

Never attempt to fight a large fire with a handheld extinguisher. These small devices are designed for putting out small fires centered around a single object (approximately the size of a small trash can). Call the fire department and let firefighters handle larger fires.

Don't attempt to put out a fire if you don't have a safe escape route. Instead, focus on finding a way out of the room as quickly as possible and leave fire-fighting to the professionals.

Don't use the wrong extinguisher for the job, such as a Class A unit on a grease fire, as this can make the fire worse.

SAFETY PLANS AND RESOURCES

MetroEd's OSHA safety plans, Emergency Response Safety Plans, Safety Committee minutes and SDS link are located on the website.

Other resources available to all employees are:

- Safety Newsletters
- Safety Committee
- Bargaining Unit contracts and representatives
- Human Resources and/or Supervisor
- Internet links: OSHA, EPA, DPR, HAS

Employees should be able to answer any question or concern they have by using the available resources.

Medical Emergency Procedures in the Workplace

What is a medical emergency?

A medical emergency can be defined as a serious and unforeseen situation that has been caused by a sudden illness or injury, requiring urgent medical attention. A range of medical emergencies can occur in the workplace, but sometimes the type of workplace you are situated in and the nature of the work can determine the type of emergencies which happen.

Types of medical emergencies could include:

- Cardiac arrest/heart attack
- Choking
- Continuous bleeding
- Stroke
- Seizure
- Slips and trips
- Falling from height
- Burns
- Cuts
- Allergic reactions

Medical emergencies are likely to occur more often if the workplace environment is not maintained safely and securely. If the work area is littered with wires and unsafe equipment, then employees could easily fall over and hurt themselves. High-risk workplaces, such as sites where employees are working at height or working with flammable materials, is naturally more dangerous and therefore could result in a higher rate of medical emergencies.

Medical conditions which can instigate heart attacks and seizures are unforeseen, and therefore we cannot know when these medical emergencies will occur. However, being prepared and knowing how to deal with these types of emergencies will ensure you can help an individual if such an emergency occurs.

What to do in a medical emergency

The key to handling medical emergencies in the workplace is to anticipate different types of emergencies before they happen, so that you have a medical procedure in place which you can initiate immediately.

There are three fundamental aspects to carrying out an initial response to a medical emergency:

Check: Check over the injured individual to assess what type of medical emergency they have encountered.

Call: Call 911 so that emergency life support and help will arrive as soon as possible.

Care: The designated first aiders in the workplace should provide the relevant medical emergency procedure. Do not move the person unless absolutely necessary to keep them safe.

Collapse

If you find someone unconscious but breathing, check if they have any other obvious injuries such as a bleeding wound. If there are none (and you don't think they have a spinal injury), get them into the recovery position and wait with them until medical help arrives. Make sure their airway remains clear and they're still breathing properly.

Choking

If someone is suffering from severe choking (unable to shout, speak or cough), it's likely they need immediate help to clear the blockage. Stand behind them and support their chest with one hand, while giving them up to five sharp blows to the back – between their shoulder blades – with the heel of your other hand. If this doesn't work, administer five abdominal thrusts. Lean them forwards, pressing your fist above their navel and covering it with your other hand, and pull into them sharply, inwards and upwards. Repeat these processes until help arrives. Please note that abdominal thrusts shouldn't be performed on pregnant women or very young children.

Burns

If someone in the workplace receives a burn or scald, run the wound under cold water for around twenty minutes. Remove any clothing (unless it pulls on the skin) and loosely cover the burn with a clean, dry dressing, or some cling film if it's available. Severe burns should always mean the emergency services are called.

Electric Shock

Don't touch someone who has received an electric shock unless the power supply has been cut off at the mains, which should be done straight away. The emergency services need to be called at the first opportunity.

Allergic Reaction

A severe reaction to an allergen, often called anaphylaxis, is a medical emergency. If someone in the workplace has such a reaction, use an auto-injector if they carry one and you know how to do so, and call the emergency services even if their symptoms begin to improve. Remove the allergen that's triggered the reaction if you can. Lie the person down flat and monitor their condition until help arrives.