



COAST GUARD UPDATES

Fire Extinguishing Equipment Requirements

This past summer, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) made a number of changes and updates to fire safety rules found throughout Titles 33 and 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). These improvements pertain to all classes of vessels, including recreational boats and uninspected vessels, and became effective on August 22, 2016.

Two changes will be of primary interest to the ABYC community:

1. The USCG is now using the UL performance-based classification system for portable fire extinguishers; and
2. The USCG has adopted National Fire Protection Association standards for maintenance and inspection of fire extinguishers (NFPA 10).

What do these changes mean for you?

Extinguisher Classification

For the first change, we've moved away from the Coast Guard's weight-based classification system and adopted UL's fire performance rating classification system. UL's system has been in place for decades and is widely accepted as the most practical with regard to fire fighting performance.

Most extinguishers on board vessels already have both a USCG rating and a UL rating, and all approved portable fire extinguishers installed before August 22, 2016 are allowed to remain on board so long as they are still in good working condition.

Excerpt from 46 CFR 25.30

§25.30-80 Location and number of fire extinguishers required for vessels constructed prior to August 22, 2016.

Vessels constructed prior to August 22, 2016 must meet the following requirements:

(a) Previously installed extinguishers with extinguishing capacities smaller than what is required in tables 25.30-20(a)(1) and 25.30-20(b)(1) of this subpart need not be replaced and may be continued in service so long as they are maintained in good condition to the satisfaction of the Officer in Charge, Marine inspection.

(b) All new equipment and installations must meet the applicable requirements in this subpart for new vessels.

Replacement with a UL rated extinguisher will only become necessary once those extinguishers are no longer serviceable (see NFPA 10 discussion below) or have been discharged.

During the transition period between USCG rating and UL rating, you will likely find portable fire extinguishers with both ratings on their label. Be sure to check that the fire extinguisher you purchase is a Coast Guard approved marine type and has the correct UL rating based on requirements for your particular vessel type (see 33 and/or 46 CFRs, as applicable).

Extinguisher Maintenance and Inspection

The USCG has adopted the maintenance and inspection practices for portable fire extinguishers set forth in the National Fire

Comparison Table 25.30-20(a)(1)

Table 25.30-20(a)(1)

Previous version

Minimum Number of B-1 Hand Portable Fire Extinguishers Required¹

Length, Feet	No Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in Machinery Space	Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in Machinery Space
Under 16	1	0
16 and over, but under 26	1	0
26 and over, but under 40	2	1
40 and over, but not over 65	3	2

¹One B-11 hand portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two B-1 hand portable fire extinguishers.

Minimum Number of 5-B Portable Fire Extinguishers Required¹

Length, Feet	No Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in Machinery Space	Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in Machinery Space
Under 16	1	0
16 and over, but under 26	1	0
26 and over, but under 40	2	1
40 and over, but not over 65	3	2

¹One 20-B portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers.

Protection Association's Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers (NFPA 10 -2010 Ed.). Portable fire extinguishers come in one of two types: rechargeable or non-rechargeable (i.e. disposable). You can determine what kind of extinguisher you have by examining it to see if it is marked with "Recharge immediately after any use" or "Dispose or return to manufacturer after any use."

Most recreational vessels have 'disposable' fire extinguishers onboard. For these vessels per NFPA 10 standards the following visual inspections are all that is required:

- Extinguishers are not in an obstructed location;
- Extinguishers have a good operating pressure (gauge is in the green);
- Extinguishers have legible instructions; and
- Extinguishers have tamper indicators that are not missing or broken.

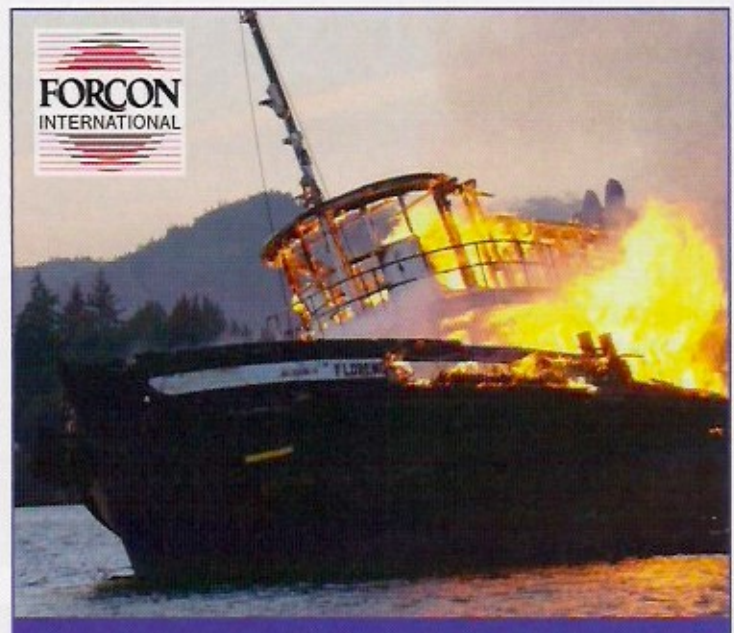
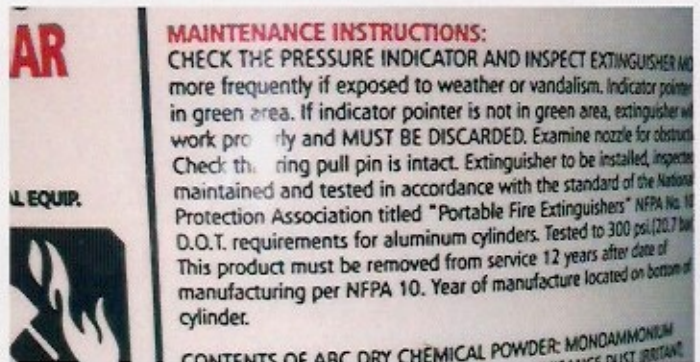
Disposable extinguishers should be disposed of and replaced immediately if any problems are found.

For rechargeable fire extinguishers, NFPA 10 outlines the various inspection and maintenance requirements for these extinguishers starting with the same visual inspection requirements outlined above. In addition, rechargeable extinguishers must also be inspected annually by a qualified technician.

For annual inspections, the Coast Guard accepts companies or technicians, permitted by the state or local authorities, to service portable fire extinguishers. Your local authorities can assist you in finding an appropriate technician or company.

Please contact your local Coast Guard Marine Inspection office if you have any questions, or would like more information, concerning this or any other vessel safety matter.

ABYC would like to thank to the Sean Ramsey in the USCG Life Saving and Fire Safety Division for this contribution.



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