

Fire Extinguisher Safety

Fire extinguishers are mandatory for commercial trucks and buses and recommended in personal vehicles

Personal Cars

There is no legal requirement that personal motor vehicles carry a fire extinguisher, but NFPA stipulates that recreational vehicle (RVs) should have a 5 pound BC extinguisher located near each exit. Owners of other personal vehicles often opt for a 2.5 lb. ABC dry chemical extinguisher that is light enough for easy handling and small enough to easily fit in most vehicles.

Commercial Trucks and Buses

All commercial trucks, truck tractors, and buses are required by federal law to have fire extinguishers—except those used in driveaway-towaway operations in which the vehicle *is* the commodity being transported and it has at least one set of wheels on the road.

A truck that is not transporting hazardous materials must be equipped with either a listed fire extinguisher with a rating of 5 B:C or more OR two listed fire extinguishers, each of which has a rating of 4 B:C or more.

Trucks that do transport hazardous materials requiring placarding (labeling) must carry a listed fire extinguisher with a rating of 10 B:C or more. “Listed” means that the technology has been tested by the safety organization UL. This video outlines the requirements for extinguisher types and mounting, plus shows some good examples of why these regulations exist:

Safety Brief

Extinguishers should be mounted, easy to locate, and receive regular maintenance

In all types of vehicles, fire extinguishers should be readily available for use. The trunk of a car, for example, is an inconvenient place for one to be during a fire. In addition, drivers should securely mount the extinguisher(s) to prevent it from sliding or rolling around—in an accident, a flying fire extinguisher could be deadly.

Drivers should service or replace car fire extinguishers just like home or workplace models. Owners should recharge or replace them after every use, even if they weren't completely discharged during their last operation. In addition, vehicle operators should ideally maintain any fire extinguisher via a monthly inspection and an annual service that may involve a refill.



Safety Brief

What to look for in a vehicle fire extinguisher: lightweight, compact, and durable

When purchasing a fire extinguisher for a car or other vehicle, drivers should look for light weight and a compact shape; a small, elongated cylinder is practical and can easily be stored. Extinguishers should also be installed with a storage clip or vehicle bracket.

Another important characteristic is durability; fire extinguishers should have a rugged body that can withstand an accident. Aluminum-bodied cylinders are often preferred because they are light and corrosion resistant. In addition, drivers should ensure that the extinguisher has a strong trigger that allows for controlled discharge and ensures that the equipment delivers the foam effectively. Fire extinguishers must be labeled with safety certification, and a good warranty can indicate quality manufacturing.



Safety Brief

Purchase quality vehicle fire extinguishers

Regardless of regulations, operators of all motor vehicles benefit from this protection during an emergency. Vehicle fire extinguishers must be durable, compact, reliable, and can put out specific fire types that are common on the road.



Safety Brief

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