

SAFETY MATTERS

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Introducing new Fire Extinguishers

INTRODUCTION

New fire extinguishers are being introduced into our buildings. These will replace the old 9 litre Water types as these become due for renewal. Please read this Safety Matters to understand which type of extinguisher can be used for which type of fire, and which ones you might expect to find in your building.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

When will we see the new extinguishers in our buildings?

The change to the new extinguishers has already started. Eventually these new extinguishers will be in all of our buildings. For a building with normal office type fire risks 6 litre Hydro Sprays will be used to replace the 9 litre Water types. For a building with laboratories or workshops the 6 Litre Aqua Foams will replace 9 Litre Water types.

Why the need for a change?

The introduction of the new types of extinguishers offers the following advantages:

Easier to carry

With 6 litres of extinguishing agent and a smaller body they are about 5 kg lighter than the 9 Litre water extinguishers. Also the new ergonomically designed carry handle places less strain on the hands.

More efficient when in use

The special spray nozzle on the new extinguishers atomizes the water and additive and spreads it in a more effective arc than a conventional jet nozzle, enabling them to be more effective. Under test fire conditions the new extinguishers can put out larger fires than the older 9 litre extinguishers.

What about other types of extinguisher?

Other types of extinguishers e.g. carbon dioxide, dry powder, foam, will remain available for use. This change only affects water extinguishers.

Safer to use

If a 9 litre water extinguisher was inadvertently directed at a piece of 'live' electrical equipment there was a risk of the person using the extinguisher receiving an electrical shock. The new 6 litre extinguishers are fitted with special high pressure atomiser nozzles and have additives that mean that they are safe to use near live electrical equipment provided the nozzle is no closer than 1 metre. They have passed the 35KV electrical conductivity tests to BSEN3-7:2004.

Of course the best advice is to isolate any electrical equipment before tackling the fire, irrespective of the extinguisher being used.

TYPE OF EXTINGUISHER

There will be two types of new extinguishers introduced into our buildings. These are:

Table 1: The two types of new extinguisher

The 6 Litre Water Hydro Spray

can be safely used on:

- 'Class A' solid fires involving ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, fabric, plastic, and most kinds of rubbish. This extinguisher is distinguished with an all red coloured label.



Warning! Don't use on burning liquid fires or fires involving 'live' electrical apparatus!



The 6 Litre Aqua Foam

is a dual purpose extinguisher. It can be used on:

- 'Class B' small burning liquid fires.
- 'Class A' solid fire, because foam is a water based fire-fighting agent.
- This extinguisher is distinguished with a cream coloured label



Warning! Don't use on fires involving 'live' electrical apparatus



What to do now?

If you see these new extinguishers in your building take the opportunity to check them out and read the operating instructions.

Look at the Training Page on the Health and Safety Web site for more information on our fire safety courses – see the link:

www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/hs-training/hs-training-coursedetails.aspx

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