

# WORKPLACE FIRE SAFETY

Your Complete Guide to Protecting  
**LIVES + ASSETS**



# QUICK!

**WHERE ARE THE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS  
LOCATED IN YOUR PLACE OF WORK?**

**More importantly—if you had to use a fire extinguisher, would you know how?**

Surprisingly, most people are not able to answer those questions. We all like to think that we would feel prepared in an emergency situation at work, but the truth is that most employees in the United States are simply not trained to react properly in case of a fire. There are over 70,000 serious workplace fires annually in the U.S., and over 85% of the resulting damage—whether to property, business assets, or people—is due to human behavior. That means that workplace fires can be prevented with a proactive fire safety plan.

With proper planning and training, you can empower your employees to quickly make the right decisions when it comes to preventing and responding to fires at work. By reviewing your company's fire safety plan with each employee, you're helping to save lives, protect valuable business assets, and prevent fire from taking it all away.

## **IN THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL LEARN:**

- How to prevent fires from starting with a Fire Hazard Assessment
- What are the OSHA requirements for employee fire training
- How to stay compliant with the latest training requirements
- How to manage employee response to a fire in the workplace



# THE FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT

Each company, depending on the type of business and the facility it occupies, has different needs when it comes to fire safety equipment and fire preparedness. While equipment such as sprinklers and emergency lights are standard for any public building, each business has unique requirements—not only for code compliance, but for true safety.

To ensure that your company's property, business assets and employees are completely protected with the necessary equipment, the first step in your workplace fire safety plan is to complete a fire hazard assessment.

## MOST COMMON CAUSES OF WORKPLACE FIRES

- **Electrical Malfunction:** Misused, overloaded, damaged, or improperly maintained equipment
- **Cooking Appliances:** Microwaves, toaster ovens, coffee makers, stoves
- **Heating Equipment:** Improperly installed, operated, or maintained furnaces or heaters

## WHAT IS A FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT?

A fire hazard assessment is an opportunity for a fire protection professional to walk through your facility and make specific recommendations about how you can better protect your business and your employees. Some fire protection companies will simply sell you the equipment you ask for. However, a truly effective fire protection strategy starts by looking for hazards. No recommendations should be provided until a professional has seen your building's layout, occupancy, and special hazards.

### STEP 1: DISCUSSION OF NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

The assessor first talks to the building owner, business owner, facilities manager, or other decision-maker about the needs, concerns and challenges relating to fire protection—does your company deal with any hazardous materials? Do you have any process control rooms, electrical control cabinets, or other special hazards that need a particular focus?

### STEP 2: FACILITY WALKTHROUGH

After talking through your business's specific needs, the assessor completes a walkthrough of the facility and notes any potential fire risks, areas that are not up to code, or areas that are inadequately protected.



### **STEP 3:** **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Your business is presented with complete recommendations for upgrading or supplementing its fire protection equipment based on the assessor's findings from the walkthrough. The recommendations take into account current best practices as well as the specific needs of your building and business.

While fire protection equipment is critical to the safety of any building, fire causes the most damage as a result of human behavior. The next sections discuss how to train your employees to respond properly in case of a fire in the workplace.

# FIRE SAFETY TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES

## UNDERSTANDING OSHA COMPLIANCE

To most businesses, it is common knowledge that employers need to provide portable fire extinguishers, keep them in an accessible location, and maintain the extinguishers so that they are fully charged and operable at all times. But what many people miss is the fact that, when extinguishers are provided in a workplace setting, OSHA **requires employees to be trained once a year in their use.**

Here are the OSHA guidelines that specify the need for employee fire extinguisher training:

### 1910.157(G)(1)

Where the employer has provided portable fire extinguishers for employee use in the workplace, the employer shall also provide an educational program to familiarize employees with the general principles of fire extinguisher use and the hazards involved with incipient stage fire fighting.

### 1910.157(G)(2)

The employer shall provide the education required in paragraph (G)(1) of this section upon initial employment and at least annually thereafter.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

**Q:** What if I tell my employees not to use the fire extinguishers?

**A:** **Sorry, but that's not really your choice...**

Most business owners understand that, legally, they must have fire extinguishers in the building. But many companies create policies forbidding the use of those extinguishers for their employees, figuring that the company evacuation plan is enough. Unfortunately for them, those policies will never hold up.

If an employee chooses to discharge an extinguisher in the face of a fire, it is her choice to defend herself—not the company's. The lives of your employees are worth more than a policy. Empower your employees to make their own decision whether to fight the fire, or to get themselves out.

## EDUCATING VS. TRAINING AND CONDITIONING

For some reason, the word “training” has a negative connotation to many people. They equate it to training a pet, and don’t see it as something we should be doing for our employees. Instead, many people prefer to implement “education and awareness” initiatives.

However, there is a significant difference between *education* and *training*. Education means providing information through instruction; training means **conditioning our brains and bodies to react quickly** by practicing the same thoughts and actions repeatedly. Military personnel, professional athletes, police officers—they are *trained* in their jobs to keep themselves and their teammates safe. Similarly, our employees should not simply be educated about fire in the workplace; they should be trained to protect themselves.

## RESPONDING TO FIRE IN THE WORKPLACE

Here are the 3 most important things employees need to know about responding to fires in the workplace:

- 1** If a fire starts at work, you are **not required** to attempt to put out the fire—even if there is a fire extinguisher nearby.
- 2** If you see an incipient-stage fire at work, you should quickly make the decision to **fight**—discharge an extinguisher toward the fire—or **flight**—pull the building fire alarm and get out of the building. Whichever you choose, execute your plan quickly.
- 3** Many employees’ first reaction in a fire is to call for a boss or authority figure. Employees need to be trained to **react quickly**, not to wait for instruction. Quick action saves lives and property.

### MUST-KNOW LINGO:

## INCIPIENT STAGE FIRE

An incipient stage fire is the first of four stages of fire: *incipient, growth, fully developed, and decay*.

Incipient stage fires have just ignited and can be extinguished with a portable fire extinguisher.

Recognizing a fire in this stage provides the best chance at suppression or escape.

## LIVE FIRE EXTINGUISHER TRAINING: WHAT TO EXPECT

An OSHA-compliant live fire extinguisher training session is the most effective way to train employees on fire safety in the workplace. **Impact Fire** provides on-site fire training sessions that include an in-depth presentation and a chance for employees to tackle a real fire with an extinguisher.

Here is an overview of what you can expect during an Impact Fire training session:

- **100% OSHA COMPLIANCE**

Impact Fire's certified instructors provide all of the information your employees need in order to meet the OSHA training requirements. Each employee is required to sign a participation notice, so that your business has the information on record.

- **GROUP PRESENTATION**

The session begins with a dynamic presentation focused on the stages of fire and an employee's roles and responsibilities during a workplace fire. Using videos, visual aids and some surprising twists, Impact Fire's expert instructors ensure full attention and participation. This may be the "classroom" portion of the training, but it is by no means boring.



- **LIVE FIRE EXTINGUISHER TRAINING**

For many participants, this training session will be the first time they have ever discharged a fire extinguisher. Impact Fire provides instruction on proper technique, and then invites each participant to put out a controlled pan fire in a supervised environment. Your employees will gain confidence operating an extinguisher, and this training will significantly increase their success rate should they ever need to use one in their home or workplace.

- **TEAMBUILDING AND FUN**

While the session does cover a serious topic, the presentation offers plenty of lighthearted moments and quite a few laughs. Additionally, the excitement of the fire extinguisher training encourages team members to cheer each other on, resulting in a fun, bonding atmosphere that leaves participants exhilarated as well as educated.

A photograph of two men in a hallway. The man in the foreground, wearing a red polo shirt, is pointing his right hand towards a red fire alarm pull station mounted on a wall. The man in the background, wearing a white striped shirt, is also looking towards the pull station. The hallway has a sign that says "NOTICE IN POWER TEST OFF" and a fire alarm pull station with the word "FIRE" on it. The image has a blue tint.

## PRO TIP

Remember, the best way to prevent fires that cause damage to lives and property is to **change human behavior**. We can install the most advanced fire protection equipment available, but our first line of defense is always our own behavior.

**Empower yourself and your employees to make the right decision.**



# TAKE CONTROL

of Workplace Fire Prevention TODAY



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