

Portable Fire Extinguishers

2025 California Fire Code — Section 906 | California Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3

Purpose. Portable fire extinguishers provide first-aid fire protection for occupants and trained personnel. This handout summarizes where extinguishers are required, how extinguisher ratings and hazard classifications are used, required travel distances, installation and mounting rules, commercial cooking requirements, and California inspection, maintenance, servicing, and recordkeeping requirements.

1. Where Portable Fire Extinguishers Are Required

The 2025 California Fire Code requires portable fire extinguishers in a broad range of new and existing occupancies and in specific hazard locations. The extinguisher type, rating, number, and placement must match the fire hazards present.

- New and existing Group A, B, E, F, H, I, L, M, R-1, R-2, R-2.1, R-2.2, R-3.1, R-4, and S occupancies.
- Within 30 feet of travel from commercial cooking equipment and from specified domestic cooking equipment in Group I-2 and R-2 college dormitory occupancies.
- Areas where flammable or combustible liquids are stored, used, or dispensed.
- Each floor of structures under construction, except Group R-3 occupancies, as required by CFC §3306.6.
- Locations specifically identified by CFC Table 906.1, including certain hot-work, fueling, tent, high-piled storage, flammable-liquid, and LP-gas operations.
- Special-hazard areas such as laboratories, computer rooms, and generator rooms when required by the fire code official.
- Large and small family day-care homes, which require a minimum 2-A:10-B:C portable extinguisher.
- Any other location where California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1 requires portable extinguishing equipment.

Group R-2 exception. Where each dwelling unit is provided with a minimum 1-A:10-B:C portable extinguisher, the CFC limits common-area extinguisher requirements to the specific locations identified in Items 2 through 6 of §906.1.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.1 and 3306.6; CCR Title 19, Division 1, §3.29

2. Fire Classes and Extinguisher Selection

California Title 19 requires extinguisher selection to be based on the expected fire, occupancy, construction, ambient conditions, and other hazards. The extinguisher rating must be suitable for the class of fire that can reasonably occur.

Fire Class	Typical Hazard	General Requirement
Class A	Ordinary combustible materials such as wood, paper, cloth, rubber, and many plastics.	Use a Class A-rated extinguisher; sizing/distribution are based on hazard classification and floor area.
Class B	Flammable or combustible liquids.	Use a Class B-rated extinguisher sized and located for the liquid hazard.
Class C	Energized electrical equipment.	Use an extinguisher with a Class C rating and size it based on the underlying Class A or B hazard.
Class D	Combustible metals.	Use an agent specifically suitable for the metal hazard; selection and placement follow California Title 19.
Class K	Combustible cooking media such as vegetable or animal oils and fats.	Use a listed Class K extinguisher for applicable commercial cooking hazards.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.2–906.4; CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§565–573

3. Class A Size, Coverage and Travel Distance

For occupancies involving primarily Class A hazards, CFC Table 906.3(1) establishes the minimum extinguisher rating, maximum floor area per unit of Class A rating, and maximum travel distance.

Hazard Classification	Minimum Single Extinguisher	Maximum Floor Area per Unit of A	Maximum Travel Distance
Light (Low)	2-A	3,000 sq. ft.	75 ft.
Ordinary (Moderate)	2-A	1,500 sq. ft.	75 ft.
Extra (High)	4-A	1,000 sq. ft.	75 ft.

The maximum floor area credited to a single extinguisher under Table 906.3(1) is 11,250 square feet. California Title 19 contains additional rules for calculating the required number and distribution of extinguishers, including a requirement for at least one extinguisher of the minimum recommended size when the floor area is below the table threshold.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.3 and 906.3.1, Table 906.3(1); CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§567 and 568

4. Class B Liquid Hazards

For flammable or combustible liquids with a depth of 1/4 inch or less, CFC Table 906.3(2) establishes the minimum Class B rating and maximum travel distance.

Hazard Classification	Basic Minimum Rating	Maximum Travel Distance
Light (Low)	5-B / 10-B	30 ft. / 50 ft.
Ordinary (Moderate)	10-B / 20-B	30 ft. / 50 ft.
Extra (High)	40-B / 80-B	30 ft. / 50 ft.

For flammable-liquid hazards deeper than 1/4 inch, California Title 19 controls the additional sizing and placement requirements. Portable extinguishers cannot be the sole protection for an appreciable-depth flammable-liquid hazard when the surface area exceeds 10 square feet, or 20 square feet where trained personnel are continuously available under the regulatory exception. Travel distance for these hazards cannot exceed 50 feet.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.3.2 and Table 906.3(2); CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§569 and 570

5. Commercial Cooking and Class K Extinguishers

Cooking equipment involving solid fuels or vegetable or animal oils and fats requires an approved Class K-rated portable extinguisher compatible with the automatic cooking fire-extinguishing system agent. Maximum travel distance to the required cooking extinguisher is 30 feet.

- Solid-fuel cooking appliances with fireboxes of 5 cubic feet or less require either one minimum 2.5-gallon Class K wet-chemical extinguisher or two minimum 1.5-gallon Class K extinguishers.
- For up to four deep-fat fryers, each with a maximum cooking-medium capacity of 80 pounds, provide one minimum 1.5-gallon Class K extinguisher.
- For each additional group of up to four qualifying fryers, provide one additional minimum 1.5-gallon Class K extinguisher.
- For an individual fryer exceeding 6 square feet of surface area, provide Class K extinguishers in accordance with the extinguisher manufacturer's recommendations.
- Additional extinguishers must also be provided where other fire classes are present in the cooking area.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.1(2), 906.4, 906.4.1 and 906.4.2; CCR Title 19, Division 1, §573

6. Location, Visibility and Accessibility

- Extinguishers must be conspicuously located, readily accessible, and immediately available for use.
- Locations should be along normal paths of travel unless the fire code official determines that the hazard requires a different location.
- Extinguishers must not be obstructed or obscured from view. Where visual obstruction cannot be avoided, an approved means must identify the extinguisher location.

- Extinguishers exposed to impact, vibration, corrosive conditions, or other physical damage must be adequately protected.
- Extinguishers must be maintained fully charged and operable and kept in their designated locations when not in use.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.5 and 906.6; CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§567, 567.1 and 567.5

7. Installation, Mounting and Cabinets

Hand-held extinguishers must be securely installed on the manufacturer-supplied hanger or bracket, or placed in an approved cabinet or wall recess. The mounting surface and hardware must support the extinguisher and prevent dislodgment.

Installation Condition	California Requirement
Extinguisher gross weight ≤ 40 lb.	Top of extinguisher not more than 5 ft. above floor.
Extinguisher gross weight > 40 lb.	Top of hand-held extinguisher not more than 3½ ft. above floor.
All installed hand-held extinguishers	Bottom of extinguisher at least 4 in. above floor.
Cabinets	Generally cannot be locked. Approved emergency-access arrangements are permitted where malicious use is a concern; special I-2/I-3 provisions also apply.
Temperature exposure	Do not install where temperatures are outside the range identified on the extinguisher label or service manual.
Wheeled units	Locate conspicuously in a designated location; access routes must accommodate movement of the unit.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§906.7–906.10; CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§567.2–567.8

8. Monthly Inspection Requirements

Portable fire extinguishers must be manually inspected when first placed in service and at least monthly thereafter by the building owner, occupant, or an authorized agent, unless the extinguisher is electronically monitored in accordance with the code. More frequent inspection can be required where conditions warrant.

A manual inspection includes checking at least the following:

- The extinguisher is in its designated location.
- Access and visibility are not obstructed.
- Operating instructions are legible and facing outward.
- Safety seals and tamper indicators are intact.
- There is no obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage, or clogged nozzle.
- The pressure gauge or indicator is in the operable range or position.
- The extinguisher appears full by weighing or hefting, as applicable.
- For wheeled units, tires, wheels, carriage, hose, and nozzle are in serviceable condition.
- For applicable nonrechargeable units, the push-to-test pressure indicator is tested.

Inspection records. The owner must retain inspection records until the next required maintenance. At least monthly, the inspection date and inspector initials must be recorded on an attached tag/label, a maintained inspection checklist, or an electronic recordkeeping system.

California references: CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§574.1, 574.2, 574.3 and 574.5; 2025 CFC §906.2

9. Annual Maintenance, Servicing and Tags

California requires portable fire extinguishers to receive maintenance annually, immediately after use, when an inspection indicates maintenance is necessary, and at the time of required hydrostatic testing. Required maintenance and servicing are regulated by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM).

- Annual maintenance must be documented with an approved annual maintenance tag attached to the extinguisher.
- Maintenance and servicing personnel must hold the applicable valid California certification, and the servicing concern must hold the appropriate OSFM license for the work performed.

- When an extinguisher is removed from service for maintenance or recharge, it must be replaced with an extinguisher suitable for the hazard and having at least an equal rating.
- Stored-pressure dry-chemical and dry-powder extinguishers that require a 12-year hydrostatic test are also subject to the California 6-year maintenance procedure.
- Nonrechargeable extinguishers are removed from service at a maximum interval of 12 years from manufacture and are not recharged or hydrostatically tested, subject to the special halogenated-agent handling exception.

California references: CCR Title 19, Division 1, §§575.1, 575.4, 575.10, 576.1, 595.5 and 596; 2025 CFC §906.2.1

10. California Regulatory Standard vs. NFPA 10

For portable fire extinguishers in California, the 2025 CFC specifically directs selection, installation, inspection, testing, and maintenance to California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3. CFC Table 901.6.1 likewise identifies Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3 as the maintenance standard for portable fire extinguishers. NFPA 10 may still be referenced by other codes, standards, listings, or project-specific provisions, but California Title 19 is the primary statewide regulatory standard incorporated into CFC §906.

Code references: 2025 CFC §§901.6.1 and 906.2; CCR Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3

11. Quick Compliance Check

- ☐ Extinguishers are provided in every occupancy and special-hazard location where CFC §906.1 requires them.
- ☐ Each extinguisher is correctly rated for the Class A, B, C, D, or K hazard present.
- ☐ Class A and Class B extinguisher quantities, ratings, floor-area coverage, and travel distances comply with the applicable tables and Title 19.
- ☐ Commercial cooking areas have the correct Class K extinguisher(s) within the required travel distance.
- ☐ Extinguishers are conspicuous, unobstructed, readily accessible, and protected from physical/environmental damage.
- ☐ Mounting heights comply with the 5-ft., 3½-ft., and 4-in. limits, as applicable.
- ☐ Cabinets and mounting brackets comply with California requirements and do not delay emergency access.
- ☐ Monthly inspections are current and documented.
- ☐ Annual maintenance is current and the approved service tag is present.
- ☐ Any extinguisher removed from service is immediately replaced with a unit suitable for the hazard and of at least equal rating.

Applicable Code References

- 2025 California Fire Code, Title 24, Part 9 — §§901.6.1 and 906; Table 906.1; Tables 906.3(1) and 906.3(2).
- California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3 — Fire Extinguishers, including Articles 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 as applicable.
- California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, §3.29 — Portable Fire Extinguishing Equipment.
- California Office of the State Fire Marshal — Fire Extinguisher Program (licensing, certification, approved devices, and servicing regulation).

Public-information notice. This handout summarizes commonly applicable requirements. The adopted California codes and regulations, approved plans, equipment listings, manufacturer instructions, and determinations of the enforcing agency or fire code official govern where a conflict or project-specific condition exists.