



A publication dedicated to the preservation of a classic and timeless vehicle

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## FIGHTING SMALL FIRES

by Mac McCoy

Without question, the first rule of GMC Motorhome firefighting is to save lives first and property second. Your priority is to get your family safely out of the motorhome and then, if you can do so without endangering yourself or others, use the firefighting aids available to you.

To be most effective at fighting a fire, you must know the purposes and limitations of your equipment, as well as how to properly maintain and use it. Don't wait until a fire breaks out to try to figure out what to do. Take your extinguisher out now and have a look at it to make sure you're prepared to use it if the time ever comes. The time you save could mean the difference between minor damage and major disaster.

### The Parts of a Fire Extinguisher

Most portable fire extinguishers for home use consist of six main parts you should be familiar with.

**Cylinder:** This is the body of the extinguisher. It is pressurized and holds some combination of extinguishing agent and expellant gas.

**Handle:** This is nothing more than a grip for carrying or holding the extinguisher. The type of handle design may vary according to the manufacturer. Lifting an extinguisher by the handle will not cause the unit to discharge.

**Trigger:** This is usually a short lever mounted above the handle at the top of the extinguisher, although some units differ. The unit will discharge when you squeeze the trigger.

**Nozzle:** This is at the top of the extinguisher where the extinguishing agent is expelled and often has a hose attached.

**Pressure Gauge:** The effective range of an extinguisher and its ability to expel all of its agent both decrease as pressure drops. Check the pressure of

your extinguisher on a regular basis. Have it recharged if the pressure drops below the normal operating level.

**Locking Mechanism:** All portable fire extinguishers must come with some type of locking mechanism to prevent accidental discharge. The mechanism must be removed or released for the extinguisher to work.

### Fire Extinguisher Markings

It is essential that the type of fire extinguisher you use is appropriate for the type of fire you are fighting. If, for example, you spray water on a grease fire in the galley, the water will cause the grease to splatter, and the fire will likely spread. If you put water on electrical equipment that is on fire, you are putting yourself in danger of electrical shock. Depending on their intended use, fire extinguishers use a variety of extinguishing agents (water or chemical) for putting out a fire.

**Classifications:** Fire extinguishers are divided into classifications based on what type of materials are burning. The most common classes are A, B, and C. Following is what each class includes.

**Class A:** Ordinary Combustibles—wood, cloth, rubber, paper, many plastics, fiberglass, basically anything that leaves an ash.

**Class B:** Flammable Liquids—gasoline, oil, and oil-based paint.

**Class C:** Energized Electrical Equipment—wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery, and appliances. Class C does not include fires involving the 12-volt DC equipment found in all coaches. Once you deenergize or unhook from shore power and turn off your inverter or generator, a fire that occurs is a Class A fire rather than a Class C fire.

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