

ABOUT CODE CORNER

CCFS would like to remind you to check with your local "Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)" for questions and opinions concerning your local Fire and Building Codes.

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Your local codes or ordinances may vary.

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Code Corner SECTION 906 PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

906.1 Where required. Portable fire extinguishers shall be installed in the following locations.

1. In new and existing Group A, B, E, F, H, I, M, R-1, R-2, R-4 and S occupancies.

Exception: In Group R-2 occupancies, portable fire extinguishers shall be required only in locations specified in Items 2 through 6 where each dwelling unit is provided with a portable fire extinguisher having a minimum rating of 1-A:10-B:C.

2. Within 30 feet (9144 mm) of commercial cooking equipment.

3. In areas where flammable or combustible liquids are stored, used or dispensed.

4. On each floor of structures under construction, except Group R-3 occupancies, in accordance with Section 3315.1.

5. Where required by the sections indicated in Table 906.1.

6. Special-hazard areas, including but not limited to laboratories, computer

rooms and generator rooms, where required by the fire code official.

Deviable fire extinguishers are required in certain instances to give the occupants the means to suppress a fire in its incipient stage. The capability for manual fire suppression can contribute to the protection of the occupants, especially if there are evacuation difficulties associated with the occupancy or the specific hazard in the area. To be effective, personnel must be properly trained in the use of portable fire extinguishers.

Because of the highhazard nature of building contents, portable fire extinguishers are required in occupancies in Group H.

Portable fire extinguishers are required in occupancies in Groups A, B, E, F, I, M, R-1, R-2, R-4 and S because of the need to control the fire in its early stages and because evacuation can be slowed by the density of the occupant load, the capability of the occupants to evacuate or the overall fuel load in the building. Because the IBC references the code for fire extinguisher requirements in new buildings, the code is applicable to new buildings.

Portable fire extinguishers are required in areas containing special hazards such as commercial cooking equipment and specific hazardous operations as indicated in Table 906.1. Because of the potentially extreme fire hazard associated with such areas or occupancy conditions, prompt extinguishment of the fire is critical.

Portable fire extinguishers are required in all buildings under construction, except in occupancies in Group R-3. The extinguishers are intended for use by construction personnel to suppress a fire in its incipient stages.

Portable fire extinguishers are also required in laboratories, computer rooms and other work spaces in which fire hazards may exist based on the use of the space. Many of these will be addressed by the re-



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About the 2012 Edition ... The Center will be publishing sections of the 2012 IFC for your review and comparison. Please note that CCFS is not suggesting you adopt this new regulation. Any regulations used in your state/organization should be in accordance with the recommendations set forth by your local Building Regulations Organization and State Fire Marshal's Office.

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quired occupancy group criteria or by the specific hazard provisions of Table 906.1. Laboratories, for example, may not be considered Group H, but still use limited amounts of hazardous materials that would make manual means of fire extinguishment desirable.

The exception to Item 1 that exempts the installation of portable fire extinguishers (PFEs) in low-hazard areas of Group A, B and E occupancies when the fire areas are equipped with an automatic sprinkler system utilizing quickresponse automatic sprinklers was deleted from the 2012 edition of the IBC and the code. The revision of this exception will result in additional PFEs being required in these occupancies and allow for a modification of the requirements in certain Group R-2 occupancies.

Several concerns arose over the years since the exception was first introduced in the 2000 edition of the code. The biggest issue was that many code officials believed it is inappropriate to place complete reliance on automatic sprinkler systems for the pro-

tection of assembly, business and educational occupancies. An analysis of fire loss data for Group A occupancies, performed by the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) during the investigation of a large life-loss fire confirmed that assumption was correct. While investigating the Station Fire, a nightclub fire where 100 people died in 2003, NIST also analyzed the performance of portable fire extinguishers in night clubs. NIST also analyzed NFPA fire loss data for nightclubs from 1990 through 1994 and found that almost 36 percent of fires in public assembly structures were extinguished by PFEs or other means during the incipient phase. These data show that without PFEs, occupants commonly used other tools to try to extinguish incipient fires. The NIST analysis found that 28 percent of all incipient fires were extinguished using PFEs and the remaining 8 percent used makeshift means. The study concluded that it was important for fire code officials to reinforce and educate nightclub employees on the purpose and capability

of PFEs for controlling incipient fires.

Another issue expressed by fire code officials was the retrofitting of an automatic sprinkler system into existing buildings. In several cases, these retrofits resulted in the removal of PFEs. The removal of PFEs is believed to reduce the level of protection in the building. Given that the old exception to Item 1 included Group A occupancies, based on the referenced NIST report, its deletion was warranted for Group A occupancies.

The exception to Item 1, as revised in the 2012 code, permits smaller PFEs in dwelling units of Group R-2 occupancies instead of larger PFEs in the common areas. Under the revised exception, the installation of 1-A:10-B:C PFEs within individual dwelling units that allows apartment owners to eliminate their installation in common areas such as corridors, laundry rooms and swimming pool areas. PFEs in these areas are susceptible to vandalism or theft. Another issue is that larger PFEs are more difficult for the infirm and elderly to safely deploy and operate.

For the period of 2003 through 2007, NFPA re-



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ports approximately 38,000 fires occur annually in apartment buildings. Sixty percent of these fires occur inside of dwelling units versus 14 percent that occur in common areas covered by Items 3 and 6 of Section 906.1. It is more logical to place PFEs inside of dwelling units versus common areas because it locates the extinguisher in an area where statistically most fires occur. If the occupant cannot control the fire using the PFE, he or she can escape and allow the automatic sprinkler system to operate and control the fire. This particular code change improves the safety of Group R-2 residents because it does not require them to leave a dwelling involved in a fire, find a PFE and then return to the fireinvolved dwelling unit to attempt incipient fire attack.

TABLE 906.1. See next column

Table 906.1 lists those sections of the code that represent specific occupancy conditions requiring portable fire extinguishers for incipient fire control.

	TABLE 906.1
ADDITIONAL REQUIRE	D PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

IFC SECTION	SUBJECT
303.5	Asphalt kettles
307.5	Open burning
308.1.3	Open flames-torches
309.4	Powered industrial trucks
2005.2	Aircraft towing vehicles
2005.3	Aircraft welding apparatus
2005.4	Aircraft fuel-servicing tank vehicles
2005.5	Aircraft hydrant fuel-servicing vehicles
2005.6	Aircraft fuel-dispensing stations
2007.7	Heliports and helistops
2108.4	Dry cleaning plants
2305.5	Motor fuel-dispensing facilities
2310.6.4	Marine motor fuel-dispensing facilities
2311.6	Repair garages
2404.4.1	Spray-finishing operations
2405.4.2	Dip-tank operations
2406.4.2	Powder-coating areas
2804.2	Lumberyards/woodworking facilities
2808.8	Recycling facilities
2809.5	Exterior lumber storage
2903.5	Organic-coating areas
3006.3	Industrial ovens
3104.12	Tents and membrane structures
3206.1	Rack storage
3315.1	Buildings under construction or demolition
3317.3	Roofing operations
3408.2	Tire rebuilding/storage
3504.2.6	Welding and other hot work
3604.4	Marinas
5203.6	Combustible fibers
5703.2.1	Flammable and combustible liquids, general
5704.3.3.1	Indoor storage of flammable and combustible liquids
5704.3.7.5.2	Liquid storage rooms for flammable and combustible liquids
5705.4.9	Solvent distillation units
5706.2.7	Farms and construction sites—flammable and com- bustible liquids storage
5706.4.10.1	Bulk plants and terminals for flammable and com- bustible liquids
5706.5.4.5	Commercial, industrial, governmental or manufac- turing establishments-fuel dispensing
5706.6.4	Tank vehicles for flammable and combustible liquids
5906.5.7	Flammable solids
6108.2	LP-gas





Everyone Graduates



listed occupancy conditions, it may identify the required rating of the extinguisher that is compatible with the hazard involved in addition to referencing Section 906.

906.2 General requirements. Portable fire extinguishers shall be selected, installed and maintained in accordance with this section and NFPA 10.

Exceptions:

1. The travel distance to reach an extinguisher shall not apply to the spectator seating portions of Group A-5 occupancies.

2. Thirty-day inspections shall not be required and maintenance shall be allowed to be once every three years for drychemical or halogenated agent portable fire extinguishers that are supervised by a listed and approved electronic monitoring device, provided that all of the following conditions are met:

2.1. Electronic monitoring shall confirm that extinguishers are properly positioned, properly charged and unobstructed.

2.2. Loss of power or circuit continuity to the electronic monitoring

device shall initiate a trouble signal.

2.3. The extinguishers shall be installed inside of a building or cabinet in a noncorrosive environment.

2.4. Electronic monitoring devices and supervisory circuits shall be tested every three years when extinguisher maintenance is performed.

2.5. A written log of required hydrostatic test dates for extinguishers shall be maintained by the owner to verify that hydrostatic tests are conducted at the frequency required by NFPA 10.

3. In Group I-3, portable fire extinguishers shall be permitted to be located at staff locations.

• NFPA 10 contains minimum requirements for the selection, installation and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers. Portable fire extinguishers are investigated and rated in conformance to NFPA 10 and listed under a variety of standards. Portable fire extinguishers must be labeled and rated for use on fires of the type, severity and hazard class protected.

NFPA 10 notes that more frequent inspections may be necessary where conditions warrant. For existing installations, a history of recent fires, vandalism, physical abuse and theft should be considered in determining if more frequent inspections are needed. For both existing and new facilities, determining the frequency of inspections should consider the environmental conditions in which the extinguisher will be located, including corrosiveness and temperature variations; and, the possibility of obstructions that may place the extinguisher out of reach in case of an emergency.

Exception 1 recognizes the openness to the atmosphere associated with Group A-5 occupancies. A fire in open areas is more obvious to all spectators. Group A-5 occupancies also do not accumulate smoke and hot gases because they are not enclosed spaces. These reasons, plus the lengthy travel distance within seating areas, make it reasonable and practical not to apply the travel distance to a PFE criteria in Group A-5. Revised travel distance allowances would need to be approved by



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the fire code official. Group A-5 occupancies also tend to be more subject to the corrosive conditions of an outdoor environment, and may include freeze/thaw cycles that can be detrimental to fire extinguishers.

Exception 2 acknowledges a 30-day inspection interval similar to NFPA 10. An electronic monitoring device can determine whether or not the fire extinguisher is still present and whether or not its contents are still at the proper charge. The use of such devices, being relatively new, is allowed if it is limited to dry-chemical and halogenated agents with the additional safeguards noted in the list. Where inspection intervals may be at more frequent intervals, as discussed above, the use of electronic monitoring may have even greater benefit and is acknowledged as such in NFPA 10. The log, noted in the exception, can be a written log or a printout of the electronic log maintained by the electronic monitoring device. This exception provides the building owner with an alternative to the contract inspections popularly used.

Exception 3 recognizes

that portable fire extinguishers located throughout the facility are at times tampered with, removed or used for weapons by inmates in a detention or correctional setting. This exception would protect the extinguishers from damage or removal by inmates while still making them available to staff and employees for use in an emergency situation.

906.2.1 Certification of service personnel for portable fire extinguishers. Service personnel providing or conducting maintenance on portable fire extinguishers shall possess a valid certificate issued by an approved governmental agency, or other approved organization for the type of work performed.

• Maintenance of fire protection systems and devices are minimum Chapter 9 requirements. Fire protection systems, like other technologies, have advanced new designs which require a clear understanding of their construction and maintenance. To ensure that systems and devices are properly maintained, the code now requires individuals performing these activities be certified. Certification must

be issue by an approved organization or governmental agency.

These provisions align the code with NFPA standards governing the inspection and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers.

Qualifications for individuals who service portable fire extinguishers are established in the 2010 edition of NFPA 10. Section 7.1.2.1 of NFPA 10 requires individuals inspecting and servicing portable fire extinguishers be trained and certified to reliably perform these activities.

906.3 Size and distribution. The size and distribution of portable fire extinguishers shall be in accordance with Sections 906.3.1 through 906.3.4.

Proper selection and distribution of portable fire extinguishers is essential to having adequate protection for the building structure and the occupancy conditions within. This section introduces the sections that provide those requirements. Determination of the desired type of portable fire extinguisher depends on the character of the fire anticipated, building occu-



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pancy, specific hazards and ambient temperature conditions [see commentary, Tables 906.3(1) and 906.3(2)].

906.3.1 Class A fire hazards. Portable fire extinguishers for occupancies that involve primarily Class A fire hazards, the minimum sizes and distribution shall comply with Table 906.3(1).

Class A fires generally

involve materials considered to be "ordinary combustibles," such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber and most plastics [see commentary, Table 906.3(1)].

Table 906.3(1), which parallels Table 6.2.1.1 of NFPA 10, establishes the minimum number and rating of fire extinguishers for Class A fires in any particular occupancy. The occupancy classifications are further defined in NFPA 10. The maximum area that a single fire extinguisher can protect is determined based on the rating of the fire extinguisher. The travel distance limitation of 75 feet (22 860 mm) is intended to be the actual walking distance along a normal path of travel to the extinguisher. For this reason, it is necessary to select fire extinguishers that comply with both the

	LIGHT	ORDINARY	EXTRA
	(Low)	(Moderate)	(High)
	HAZARD	HAZARD	HAZARD
	OCCUPANCY	OCCUPANCY	OCCUPANCY
Minimum rated single extinguisher	2-A ^c	2-A	4-Aª
Maximum floor area	3,000	1,500	1,000
per unit of A	square feet	square feet	square feet
Maximum floor area for extinguisher ^b	11,250	11,250	11,250
	square feet	square feet	square feet
Maximum travel distance to extinguisher	75 feet	75 feet	75 feet

TABLE 906.3(1) FIRE EXTINGUISHERS FOR CLASS A FIRE HAZARDS

For SI: 1 foot = 304.8 mm, 1 square foot = 0.0929 m2, 1 gallon = 3.785 L.

a. Two 21/2-gallon water-type extinguishers shall be deemed the equivalent of one 4-A rated extinguisher.

b. Annex E.3.3 of NFPA 10 provides more details concerning application of the maximum floor area criteria. |

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c. Two water-type extinguishers each with a 1-A rating shall be deemed the equivalent of one 2-A rated extinguisher for Light (Low) Hazard Occupancies.





distribution criteria and travel distance limitation for a specific occupancy classification.

906.3.2 Class B fire hazards. Portable fire extinguishers for occupancies involving flammable or combustible liquids with depths of less than or equal to 0.25-inch (6.35 mm) shall be selected and placed in accordance with Table 906.3(2).

Portable fire extinguishers for occupancies involving flammable or combustible liquids with a depth of greater than 0.25-inch (6.35 mm) shall be selected and placed in accordance with NFPA 10. Class B fires involve flammable and combustible liquids, oil-based paints, alcohols, solvents, flammable gases and similar materials. Selection of these extinguishers is made based on the depth of the liquid that could become involved in a fire. If the depth is 1/4-inch (6.35 mm) or less, selection is made using Table 906.3 (2). Class B extinguishers for greater liquid depth, characterized in NFPA 10 as "appreciable depth," must be selected and installed in accordance with Section 6.3.2 of NFPA 10 [see commentary, Table 906.3(2)].

• Fires involving flammable or combustible liquids present a severe hazard challenge regardless of occupancy. Table 906.3(2), which parallels Table 6.3.1.1 of NFPA 10, prescribes the minimum portable fire extinguisher requirements where flammable or combustible liquids are limited in depth [0.25 inch (6 mm) or less]. As can be seen in the table, the size of the extinguisher is directly related to the travel distance to the extinguisher for each given occupancy classification. These fire extinguisher provisions are independent of whether

TABLE 906.3(2) FLAMMABLE OR COMBUSTIBLE LIQUIDS WITH DEPTHS OF LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 0.25-INCH*

TYPE OF HAZARD	BASIC MINIMUM EXTINGUISHER RATING	MAXIMUM TRAVEL DISTANCE TO EXTINGUISHERS (feet)	
Light (Low)	5-B 10-B	30 50	
Ordinary (Moderate) 10-B 20-B		30 50	
Extra (High)	40-B 80-B	30 50	

For SI: 1 inch = 25.4 mm, 1 foot = 304.8 mm.

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a. For requirements on water-soluble flammable liquids and alternative sizing criteria, see Section 5.5 of NFPA 10.



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other fixed automatic fire extinguishing systems are installed. For occupancy conditions involving flammable or combustible liquids in potential depths greater than 0.25 inch (6 mm), the selection and spacing criteria of NFPA 10 must be used in addition to any applicable requirements in Chapter 57 and NFPA 30.

906.3.3 Class C fire hazards. Portable fire extinguishers for Class C fire hazards shall be selected and placed on the basis of the anticipated Class A or B hazard.

 Class C fires involve energized electrical equipment where the electrical nonconductivity of the extinguishing agent is critical. The need for this class of extinguisher is simply based on the presence of the hazard in an occupancy and no numerical rating is required.

906.3.4 Class D fire hazards. Portable fire extinguishers for occupancies involving combustible metals shall be selected and placed in accordance with NFPA 10.

 Class D fires are fires involving flammable solids, the bulk of which are combustible metals, including, but not limited to magnesium, potassium, sodium and titanium. Most Class D extinguishers will have a special low velocity nozzle or discharge wand to gently apply the agent in large volumes to avoid disrupting any finely divided burning materials. Extinguishing agents are also available in bulk and can be applied with a scoop or shovel. While Class D extinguishers are often referred to as "dry chemical" fire extinguishers, they are more properly called "dry powder" fire extinguishers because their mechanism of extinguishment is by a smothering action rather than by chemical reaction with the combustion process.

There are several Class D fire-extinguisher agents available, some will handle multiple types of metal fires, others will not. Sodium carbonatebased extinguishers are used to control sodium, potassium, and sodiumpotassium alloy fires but have limited use on other metals. This material smothers and forms a crust. Sodium chloridebased extinguishers contain sodium chloride salt and a thermoplastic additive. The plastic melts to form an oxygenexcluding crust over the metal, and the salt dissipates heat. This powder is useful on most alkali metals including magnesium, titanium, aluminum, sodium, potassium, and zirconium. Graphite based-extinguishers contain dry graphite powder that smothers burning metals. Unlike sodium chloride powder extinguishers, the graphite powder fire extinguishers can be used on very hot burning metal fires, such as lithium, but the powder will not stick to and extinguish flowing or vertical lithium fires. The graphite powder acts as a heat sink as well as smothering the metal fire. See the commentary to Section 5906.5.7 for a discussion of extinguishing flammable solid fires.

906.4 Cooking grease fires. Fire extinguishers provided for the protection of cooking grease fires shall be of an approved type compatible with the automatic fireextinguishing system agent and in accordance with Section 904.11.5.

 The combination of high-efficiency cooking appliances and hotter burning cooking media creates a potentially severe fire hazard. Alt-



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hough commercial cooking systems must have an approved exhaust hood and be protected by an approved automatic fire extinguishing system, a manual means of extinguishment is desirable to attack a fire in its incipient stage.

As indicated in Section 904.11.5, a Class K-rated portable fire extinguisher must be located within 30 feet (9144 mm) of travel distance of commercial-type cooking equipment. Class K-rated extinguishers have been specifically tested on commercial cooking appliances using vegetable or animal oils or fats. These portable fire extinguishers are usually of sodium bicarbonate or potassium bicarbonate dry-chemical type.

906.5 Conspicuous location. Portable fire extinguishers shall be located in conspicuous locations where they will be readily accessible and immediately available for use. These locations shall be along normal paths of travel, unless the fire code official determines that the hazard posed indicates the need for placement away from normal paths of travel.

 Fire extinguishers must be located in readily accessible locations along normal egress paths. This increases the occupants familiarity with the location of the fire extinguishers. When considering location, the most frequent occupants should be considered. These are the occupants who would become most familiar with the fireextinguisher placement. For most buildings, it is the employees who are most familiar with their surroundings; therefore, a good understanding of employee operations is important for proper extinguisher placement.

906.6 Unobstructed and unobscured. Portable fire extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured from view. In rooms or areas in which visual obstruction cannot be completely avoided, means shall be provided to indicate the locations of extinguishers.

Portable fire extinguishers must be located where they are readily visible at all times. If visual obstruction cannot be avoided, the location of the extinguishers must be marked by an approved means of identification. This could include additional signage, lights, arrows or other means approved by the fire code official. Unobstructed does not necessarily mean visible from all angles within the space. Often, columns or furnishings may obscure the extinguisher from one direction or another. These are not by themselves obstructions. The intent is that the extinguisher is not hidden but rather can be readily found. If the extinguisher is placed in the wall behind a door, it is clearly obstructed since it cannot be easily viewed. An extinguisher on a wall that is visible from most of the space would be considered unobstructed.

906.7 Hangers and brackets. Hand-held portable fire extinguishers, not housed in cabinets, shall be installed on the hangers or brackets supplied. Hangers or brackets shall be securely anchored to the mounting surface in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Portable fire extinguishers not housed in cabinets are usually mounted on walls or columns using securely fastened hangers.
Brackets must be used where the fire extinguishers need to be protected from impact or other potential physical damage.

906.8 Cabinets. Cabinets



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used to house portable fire extinguishers shall not be locked.

Exceptions:

1. Where portable fire extinguishers subject to malicious use or damage are provided with a means of ready access.

2. In Group I-3 occupancies and in mental health areas in Group I-2 occupancies, access to portable fire extinguishers shall be permitted to be locked or to be located in staff locations provided the staff has keys.

• Cabinets housing fire extinguishers must not be locked in order to provide quick access in an emergency. Exception 1, however, allows the cabinets to be locked in occupancies where vandalism, theft or other malicious behavior is possible. Exception 2 also permits cabinets housing fire extinguishers to be locked or to be located in staff locations in Group I-3 occupancies and mental health areas in Group I-2 occupancies. Occupants in Group I-3 areas of jails, prisons or similar restrained occupancies should not have access to fire extinguishers because they could possibly be used as a

weapon or be subject to vandalism. Staff adequately trained in the use of fire extinguishers are assumed to have ready access to the keys for the cabinets at all times.

906.9 Extinguisher installation. The installation of portable fire extinguishers shall be in accordance with Sections 906.9.1 through 906.9.3.

 This section introduces the installation criteria for portable fire extinguishers based on the weight of the unit.

906.9.1 Extinguishers weighing 40 pounds or less. Portable fire extinguishers having a gross weight not exceeding 40 pounds (18 kg) shall be installed so that their tops are not more than 5 feet (1524 mm) above the floor.

Due to the varying height and physical strength levels of persons who might be called upon to operate a portable fire extinguisher, the mounting height of the extinguisher must be commensurate with its weight so that it may be easily retrieved by anyone from its mounting location and placed into use. **906.9.2 Extinguishers** weighing more than 40 pounds. Hand-held portable fire extinguishers having a gross weight exceeding 40 pounds (18 kg) shall be installed so that their tops are not more than 3.5 feet (1067 mm) above the floor.

• See the commentary to Section 906.9.1.

906.9.3 Floor clearance. The clearance between the floor and the bottom of installed hand-held portable fire extinguishers shall not be less than 4 inches (102 mm).

The clearance between the floor and the bottom of installed hand-held extinguishers must not be less than 4 inches (102 mm) to facilitate cleaning beneath the unit and reduce the likelihood of the extinguisher becoming dislodged during cleaning operations (floor mopping, sweeping, etc.).

906.10 Wheeled units. Wheeled fire extinguishers shall be conspicuously located in a designated location.

 Wheeled fire extinguishers consist of a large-capacity (up to several hundred pounds of agent) fire extinguisher assembly (either



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stored-pressure or pressure transfer type) equipped with a carriage and wheels and discharge hose. They are constructed so that one ablebodied person could move the unit to the fire area and begin extinguishment unassisted. Wheeled fire extinguishers are capable of delivering greater flow rates and stream range for various extinguishing agents than hand-held portable fire extinguishers. Wheeled fire extinguishers are generally more

effective in high-hazard areas and, as with any extinguisher, must be readily available and stored in an approved location. The wheeled fire extinguisher should be located a safe distance from the hazard area so that it will not become involved in the fire or access to it compromised by a fire. These units are typically found at airport fueling ramps, refineries, bulk plants and similar locations where high-challenge fires may be encoun-

tered. The extinguishing agents available in wheeled units include carbon dioxide, dry chemical, dry powder and foam.

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SECTION 907

FIRE ALARM AND DETECTION SYSTEMS

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