

Did you know that there are close to 20,000 reported RV fires each year? A large percentage of these fires are transmission related fires on motor homes. Automatic transmission fluid leaking from the transmission can ignite, and quickly spread if it contacts any portion of the exhaust system. Before traveling in your RV inspect the underside for any signs of fluid leaking. Have any potential leaks checked out and repaired immediately.

Over 25% of RV fires are caused by shorts in the 12-volt electrical system. Not only do you need a fire extinguisher, you need to inspect it before each trip to make sure it is charged. Look to see if the arrow is pointing in the green area in the sight gauge. If it reads empty or needs charging replace it or have it recharged immediately. If it's a dry powder type fire extinguisher the arrow pointing in the green doesn't always guarantee that it will work. Every month you should turn dry powder extinguishers upside down, tap on the bottom of the extinguisher and shake it. It should sound hollow, sort of like a drum. If not, continue tapping on it until it sounds hollow and the powder that settled in the bottom is released.

There are four different types, or classes of fire extinguishers, **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**, and each type is for a specific type of fire.

Class A extinguishers are used for fires caused by ordinary combustibles like paper and wood.

Class B extinguishers are used for fires caused by flammable liquids like grease, gasoline and oil.

Class C extinguishers are used for fires caused by electrical equipment.

Class D extinguishers are used for fires on flammable metals and often they are specific for the type of metal it is.

Some fire extinguishers have multi class ratings like, **AB**, **BC** or **ABC** which means one fire extinguisher can be used to put out different types of fires. The National Fire Protection Agency rules that RV's must have a "**BC**" rated fire extinguisher near the exit. "**BC**" rated fire extinguishers are used for flammable liquids and gasses like grease, gasoline and oil, and for electrical fires. Many RV fires that happen inside an RV are type **A** fires caused by common combustibles like paper, and they require a type **A** fire extinguisher to put them out. This is why, in my opinion you need more than one fire extinguisher for your RV.

It's a good idea to keep a **BC** type fire extinguisher in an outside storage compartment where it is easily accessible. You should also keep a **BC** type fire extinguisher inside the RV and keep an **A** type fire extinguisher inside the RV. If you tow a trailer keep a **BC** type fire extinguisher in the tow vehicle too.

Having these fire extinguishers available is a great idea but they are worthless if you and the other people traveling in the RV don't know what type of fire they are used for and

how to properly use them. Get everybody who will be in the RV together, and make sure they understand the different types of fire extinguishers you have and where they are located in the event of an emergency.

The old style labeling for fire extinguishers, to designate what type of fire they are used for was with the letter A, B, C or D



Newer style labeling for fire extinguishers includes a picture designating the type of fire it is used for.



If it can be used for multiple types of fires it will show the pictures for the types of fires it can be used for and it will have a red diagonal line through the picture of what it cannot be used for.



Once everybody understands the different types of fire extinguishers the next step is to teach everybody how to properly use a fire extinguisher. There are different types and sizes of fire extinguishers, but for the most part they all work the same way. Teach everybody to remember the word **PASS**. This is an easy way to remember how to use a fire extinguisher, especially during an emergency. **PASS** stands for **Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep**.

Pull the pin located at the top of the fire extinguisher.

Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.

Squeeze the handle, standing approximately 8 feet away from the fire. Release the handle if you want it to stop.

Sweep the nozzle back and forth at the base of the fire until it is out. Observe the fire to make sure it does not re-ignite.

Last but certainly not least you need to have an emergency escape plan. The National Fire Protection agency requires that RV's have emergency escape windows. Make sure everybody knows where the escape window is located and how to use it. It's a good idea to practice using it so you are familiar with how to get out of the RV in case of an emergency. You should have an escape plan for the front of the RV and the rear of the RV.

Most important, do not risk your personal safety, or the safety of others, attempting to put a fire out. The first step is to get everybody out of the RV and away from the fire safely. Have somebody call 911 for help, and if you can't extinguish the fire within the first minute or so let the professionals put it out.

Happy Camping,

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