



# Township of Middletown

## Fire & Emergency Management



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## HOW TO DISPOSE OF OLD FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:

All homes should have a fire extinguisher. Smoke detectors can alert you to a fire, but fire extinguishers can put out small fires before too much damage is done. The best places to keep an extinguisher are in the kitchen and garage or if grilling in the summer time - near your outdoor grill. Fire extinguishers are rated based upon what type of fire they put out, always make sure you have the right one handy. The fire extinguisher's rating may also affect the way you dispose of it. Generally, you will have 3 options when disposing of an old extinguisher.

### Fire Extinguisher Types:

There are four basic types of fire extinguishers -- dry chemical, water, carbon dioxide and halon -- and each extinguisher works for specific fires based on its classification label. The classification label defines the fire types it is meant to extinguish.

Classification of extinguishers:

A for wood, paper and ordinary flammables.

B for liquid flammables, such as greases, gasoline and oils.

C for electrical fires.

D for flammable metals.

K for commercial restaurants and cooking fires.

Some extinguishers may have multiple label ratings, such as A B C. These will extinguish Class A, Class B and Class C fires.

### Give it a Refill:

Before disposing your extinguisher, see if you can refill it. No matter what the extinguisher was originally filled with, all fire extinguishers **that are made entirely of metal** can be refilled or recharged if necessary. There are fire extinguisher recharging companies that can be found online. During recharging, the extinguisher is inspected to make sure that meets the current requirements for fire extinguisher construction and operation. Note – Fire Departments in Bucks County *do not refill* fire extinguishers.

### Recycle It:

The bodies of some extinguishers consist of steel, a recyclable material. If the extinguisher is empty, squeeze the trigger to ensure that the unit holds no pressure

and remove the plastic top and trigger. Take the canister to any recycling facility that processes steel.

### **Toss It:**

Take your extinguisher to a “Household Hazardous Waste Day”, collection dates and times can be found on the County of Bucks web site. Or check with your local waste management facility to verify that it accepts discharged fire extinguishers with household trash. **If it still shows pressure on its gauge, take it outside and gently squeeze the trigger - pointing the nozzle into a large empty plastic trash bag.** Let it sit for a day or two to thoroughly discharge before disposal with household trash. Water and carbon dioxide extinguishers generally pose no environmental threats during disposal.

### **A Word of Warning:**

Be particularly careful when handling and disposing of older fire extinguishers. Extinguishers made prior to 1960 are often valued by collectors, but can be very dangerous. These extinguishers may contain carbon tetrachloride. Carbon tetrachloride works extremely well as a fire extinguisher, but is a known carcinogen. Exposure can be fatal if enough of the chemical is inhaled or absorbed through the skin. When heated, carbon tetrachloride produces phosgene -- more commonly known as nerve gas. Use extreme caution when handling older fire extinguishers.