EXTINGUISHERS — GUIDE

How many fire extinguishers does a business need?

Use hazard assessment and walking routes rather than a simple extinguisher count.

Updated November 10, 2026

A floor area alone does not establish the correct extinguisher count. Start with a plan of the premises, the hazards and the routes that people can actually walk.

US travel distance baseline

OSHA 1910.157(d)(2) sets a maximum travel distance of 75 feet for Class A extinguishers. Paragraph (d)(4) sets 50 feet from a Class B hazard area to an extinguisher. Paragraph (d)(5) distributes Class C protection using the pattern for the associated Class A or B hazard [Cornell LII, source below].

These are travel distances, not circles drawn through walls. Walk the route around doors, partitions and stored goods. Ask the fire authority and service company how the adopted code treats your layout.

NFPA summaries have limits

The Mitti by SafetyCulture NFPA 10 summary mentions a typical maximum travel distance of 75 feet [source below]. It is not a complete distribution table. Do not apply that single number to every hazard. The OSHA distinctions above show why the hazard matters. Ask the contractor to identify the adopted NFPA 10 edition, rating and distribution criteria in the proposed layout.

Build the survey pack

Mark exits, stairs, locked rooms, loading areas, cooking appliances and special processes. Record existing cylinder locations and label ratings. Tell the contractor about combustible metals, flammable liquids and changes in use.

Ask for a marked plan showing the proposed locations, equipment ratings and walking routes. Ask why each unit is suitable. Keep the plan with the service record and revisit it when the layout or hazards change.

Canadian sites

CCOHS advises proper size, clear visibility, ready access and installation according to the jurisdiction's Fire Code [CCOHS, source below]. Confirm local criteria. Do not use the US distances as a Canadian approval.

Sources

- Cornell LII, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.157, fetched 2026-11-10.
- Mitti by SafetyCulture, A Safety Officer's Guide to Fire Extinguisher Inspection, fetched 2026-11-10. This is a public NFPA 10 summary, not the adopted standard.
- CCOHS, Fire Extinguishers: Portable, fetched 2026-11-10.

Checked 2026-11-10. Planning information only. Confirm the adopted code, equipment instructions and local requirements with your fire authority.

Frequently asked questions

Can a calculator approve my extinguisher count?

No. A plan needs the hazards, routes, equipment ratings and local code criteria.