

Focus on Safety: Fire Extinguisher Practice

By Safety Speaker John Drebinger, April 8, 2011

I don't know about you, but I had read how to use a fire extinguisher for years and fortunately, I had never had the need to put one to use. A few years ago, I was at a location where they had the local supplier of safety equipment and fire extinguishers come to the site with instruction, a demonstration and an opportunity for each person to actually extinguish a fire. It was my turn so the instructor ignited a pan filled with a flammable liquid. I took one of the fire extinguishers and aimed at the base of the flame. I learned first-hand some very important details. First, it is entirely possible to blow the fire and the combustible material right out of the pan and spread the fire. It took me a couple of tries to figure out what worked best. Obviously, fire prevention is important, but how many of your employees know how to actually put out a fire. If someone were standing on the other side of the fire on my first try I would have splashed the fire right on to them or at the very least spread the fire. I also imagine it would be easy to panic when things began to go bad. Now, since I have actually succeeded, I have a level of confidence as well as the skills necessary. People will likely remember this because it is an emotional experience even though the conditions were controlled. I am sure you can find a vendor in your area to put on such a demonstration. Also, consider giving all your employees the opportunity even if they work in an office. You just might help save one of their family members.

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