

Tech Tips:



FIRE !!!

One of the most frightening words that a collector car owner can hear.

I was lucky on a recent club outing when the lid on a float bowl cracked and gushed gas over my hot engine and electrics ... big scare, but no fire. When I returned home, I researched and bought a fire extinguisher to mount in my MG.

This month I'll show you what I learned, what I bought, and where I mounted it..

FIRES AND UL RATINGS

Fire extinguishers are identified by the type of fires that they can extinguish. A numerical UL rating describes the extinguishing ability for each size and type of extinguisher.

Class A: Fires in ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth, trash, and plastics.

UL: *The UL rating number represents the chemical/agent's equivalent to gallons of water. Equivalent gallons equals 1.25 times the number in front of "A". "2A" would contain the equivalent to 2.5 gallons of water*

Class B: Fires in flammable liquids such as gasoline, petroleum, oil, and paint.

UL: *The numerical rating for a class B fire extinguisher refers to the number of cubic feet that the fire extinguisher will be able to extinguish. "10B" would be able to extinguish 10 square feet of a class B fire.*

Class C: Fires involving energized electrical equipment such as motors, transformers, and appliances.

UL: *Class C does not have a numerical classification.*

Class D (combustible metals) and **Class K** (cooking oils) fires are not controlled by most extinguishers for vehicles. The extinguishers do not have a numerical UL classification.

Example: A Fire Extinguisher with a rating of "1A:10B:C" would contain agents equal to 1.25 gallons of water and would be able to extinguish 10 square feet of a class B fire. "C" shows that the agent is non-conductive.

FOUR THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING

- ✓ **Mounting Location and Size** – Choose the largest size that will fit where you can retrieve it unobstructed in five seconds. Mount it so that it won't shift in an accident.
- ✓ **Effectiveness** – (UL rating) Dry chemical extinguishers are more effective than "clean agent" extinguishers.
- ✓ **Damage and Cleanup** – Dry chemical extinguishers can be quite corrosive to paint, electronics, and metals such as aluminum when discharged. They are also potentially abrasive. The fine corrosive power goes everywhere and may never be completely cleaned up, so it continues to corrode. A:B:C powder sticks to everything to retard flames and is much more corrosive than B:C extinguishers. "Clean agent" extinguishers such as CO₂, Halon, and Halotron do not leave an appreciable mess.
- ✓ **Price** – Dry chemical extinguishers are cheap. "Clean agent" extinguishers are expensive.

VEHICLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER COMPARISON						
[CLICK] for catalog						
TYPE	B:C DRY CHEM	A:B:C DRY CHEM	PURPLE K	HALON	HALOTRON	CO ₂
AGENT	sodium bicarbonate	monoammonium phosphate	potassium bicarbonate + chemical additives	Halon 1211	Halotron 1	CO ₂
UL @ 15" X 3"	10B:C	1A:10B:C	10B:C	5B:C	2B:C	size N/A
CAPACITY	2.5 lb	2.5 lb	2.5 lb	2.5 lb	2.5 lb	size N/A
UL @ 15" X 4 1/4"	10B:C 40B:C - hose	2A:10B:C 3A:40B:C - hose	30B:C - hose	10B:C	5B:C	2B:C - hose
CAPACITY	5 & 5.5 lb	5 lb	5 lb	5 lb	5 lb	2.5 lb
DAMAGE	corrosion, elec, engine	high corrosion, paint, elec, engine	less corrosion(?), elec, engine	none	none	none
CLEANUP	difficult	very difficult	difficult	light or none	light or none	none
PRICE	\$	\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$\$

SO WHAT DID I BUY?

My objective was the largest "clean agent" extinguisher that would fit into my car. Joe Fry at United Fire Protection, 2900 Shader Road in Orlando, (407) 299-0201 guided me toward my objective.

I bought a 2-1/2 pound reclaimed Halon extinguisher. It's 14-3/8" hi X 3" diam. Unfortunately, nothing larger would fit where I could reach it fast and unobstructed. The UL rating is 5B:C. Halon is less effective than dry chemical agents ... hope that the small capacity doesn't just make the fire mad instead of extinguishing it. A five pound Halon extinguisher would have been perfect.



Note: New Halon extinguishers are no longer available because it depletes the ozone. Less effective, ozone friendly Halotron replaced Halon. Halon from old extinguishers can be reclaimed and used.

I mounted it just in front of and parallel to the front of the passenger seat. It sits under the passenger's legs. I can retrieve it in less than five seconds.

HOW TO USE

Turn off the lights, accessories, and ignition to stop the fuel pump. A typical fire extinguisher contains 10 seconds of extinguishing power. Shoot the stream at the base of the fire, not at the flame. Sweep from side to side until the fire is completely out. Start using the extinguisher from a safe distance away, then move forward. Once the fire is out, keep an eye on the area in case it re-ignites.



Next Month:

MG OWNERS SURVIVAL GUIDE

What to do in a medical emergency, by John Spadaro, Chief Fire Officer / Paramedic (Ret.)