



Providing Fire Extinguishers at Apartment Buildings and Similar Residential Properties

The Berkeley Fire Code and State of California requires that residential buildings with more than two dwelling units be provided with appropriate portable fire extinguishers. This type of residence includes but is not limited to apartment buildings, condominiums, rooming/boarding houses, hotels/motels and congregate residences with over sixteen occupants. Please note that all fire extinguishers used to satisfy legal requirements must be serviced annually by or purchased within the past twelve months from a licensed fire extinguisher service company and have an official service tag from that company. Purchase of fire extinguishers from a retail store does not satisfy legal requirements

The fire code has generally required that fire extinguishers be provided in common-use areas of apartment buildings such as corridors, lobbies, laundry/storage rooms, community rooms and parking areas. This is the most common approach to providing extinguishers. When fire extinguishers are provided in common areas they must be:

- “ABC” dry chemical type and have a minimum size rating of 2A:10BC
- Mounted in dedicated labeled cabinets or on the mounting bracket provided, where they are clearly visible and are a minimum of 4 inches off the ground and maximum of 5 feet to the operating handles.
- Number / locations of required fire extinguishers:
 - One 2A extinguisher can cover up to 3000 square feet of building
 - Maximum travel distance from any part of the building to an extinguisher is 75 feet
 - Each level of the building requires at least one extinguisher (occupants shouldn't have to go up or down stairs to reach a fire extinguisher).

As of January 2014 the fire code allows apartment owners to move fire extinguishers into the individual dwelling units without special permission. If you place fire extinguishers within the dwelling units:

- Each unit must have a suitable 'ABC' dry chemical extinguisher with a minimum size rating of 1A:10BC. Note that often fire extinguisher service companies cannot service 1A sized extinguishes, so new extinguishers may need to be purchased each year. Also, a 2A:10BC size extinguisher is still the minimum size required for Small- and Large-Family Day Care operations.
- In order to provide proof of service for your fire extinguishers do not transmit evidence of servicing to the fire department. Please post a copy of the service/purchase receipt for the extinguishers in a frame within sight of the central mailbox location of the building or along the main access route for the building from the main street frontage. The posted receipt must show
 - the contact information for the service company,
 - the date of service,
 - the address of the property serviced, and
 - the total number of fire extinguishers serviced.

For additional information please contact the Fire Prevention Division of the Berkeley Fire Department at (510) 981-5585.