

## Tuross Head Rural Fire Brigade



**Fire Extinguishers and Fire Blankets:** You must have all seen a recent advertisement for these items available cheaply from a large chain store and asked yourself ... perhaps I should have these in my house/car/garage/shed etc? Of course you should, but you should also consider under what circumstances you would use these items and what maintenance is involved. More importantly, since fire extinguishers and fire blankets are fire protection devices used to extinguish or control small incipient (starting) fires, often in emergency situations, they are **not** intended for use on an out-of-control fire, such as one which



has reached the ceiling, or endangers the user (i.e. no escape route, smoke, explosion hazard, etc.) - if this happens, immediately remove yourself and others from danger then call Zero, Zero, Zero (000). Saving a house is not worth sacrificing even one life!

Remember that for a fire to burn, it needs **heat, fuel and oxygen**, to be present together. Your aim should be to remove one or more of these elements. Fire blankets can be used to starve the fire of oxygen by completely sealing off the burning object. If the fire is bigger than the size of the blanket – forget it! With fire extinguishers you should be aware that there are different types you should use depending on the type of fire. The one advertised is a 1kg dry chemical powder multi-purpose fire extinguisher which can be used on ordinary combustibles, such as wood, cloth, paper, plastic etc, flammable or combustible liquids like gasoline, kerosene and even kitchen grease (never use water on this type of fire), or fires involving energized electrical equipment, such as appliances, switches, panel boxes, and power tools etc. Whichever fire extinguisher you purchase, thoroughly investigate what type of fire(s) your extinguisher is suitable for. Also be aware that the contents of a 1kg dry chemical extinguisher will be used up in less than 10 seconds ... there won't be time to practice once the fire has started!



It is also recommended that fire extinguishers installed in all commercial buildings (offices, retail stores, warehouses, factories, etc.), in public buildings (hospitals, schools, universities, theatres, etc.) and multi-occupancy residential buildings need to be regularly inspected and tested about every six months. It seems clear that for your own safety you should also carry out a regular inspection (at least annually, when you change the batteries on your smoke detectors) and check that the pressure is appropriate (see also the comment about compacting below). And if you use the extinguisher - even if it's only partly discharged - it should be replaced.

And finally a couple of useful tip from bloggers on the *Caravanners Forum*: *“at \$10 just go and replace every fire extinguisher that you have. Don't trust those pressure indicators on them. They should be tested every year which means that the little ones should be thrown out every year. If you have one that is a few years old go outside and try it out. You may be lucky and find that it works. Whilst it is spraying just imagine how close you could get to a fire and imagine how you would attack the base of a fire on your gas bottle, your BBQ, your engine and other places. Then you will know how much time they work for. At \$10 it is a pretty good training experience for everybody involved ...”*; *“a mate and I watched our Volvo Rally car burn one night when TWO dry powder extinguishers failed to operate...WHY... because the constant thumping and pounding of off road work TIGHTLY COMPACTS DRY POWDER so that it virtually sets like cement and you don't even get a fizz out of them”*.



**PREPARE . ACT . SURVIVE .**

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