



TOWN OF BOURNE
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New U.S. Coast Guard Fire Extinguisher Regulation Effective April 20

Feb. 15, 2022 – All recreational boaters should be aware that a new regulation will go into effect regarding fire extinguishers carried on recreational motor boats. This new U.S. Coast Guard regulation aligns with the 12-years recommended by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Newly added to the boat owner's to-do list this spring will be to **check all disposable (non-rechargeable) fire extinguisher for the date of manufacture, as well as the label for the U.S. Coast Guard classification.** The reason is because a new USCG regulation beginning April 20 for disposable fire extinguishers mandates a 12-year expiration date from the date of manufacture. **Boaters can find the manufacture date stamped into the bottom of the bottle or near the UL label.** This may be two or four digits — if it is two, as in 08, that means 2008. Additionally, while the new regulation does not change the type (U.S. Coast Guard-rated) or quantity or requirement for USCG approved fire extinguishers aboard, it does specify the minimum Underwriter Laboratory (UL) classification of extinguishers to be carried aboard certain vessels — depending on the boat's model year.

The Coast Guard is phasing out older "B-I" and "B-II" extinguishers for newer "5-B" "10-B" and "20-B" extinguisher classifications. The number in this new rating refers to the size in square feet of the potential fire the device is suitable to extinguish and not the exact weight of the dry chemical inside the bottle.

Vessels on the water today that are less than 26 feet and model year 2017 or older may continue to carry older, dated or undated "B-I" or "B-II" disposable extinguishers until they are no longer serviceable or have reached 12 years of age since manufacture. At that point they must be replaced with newer class "5-B" or greater extinguishers.

Boats less than 26 feet and 2018 model year or newer must carry unexpired "5-B" "10-B" or "20-B" fire extinguishers. Having older "B-I" and "B-II" types do not meet the new carriage requirements.

Most U.S. Coast Guard approved disposable extinguishers on the market today carry at least a dual B:C rating meaning they are approved to be used on both flammable liquid and electrical fires. Many boat owners wisely prefer triple rated A:B:C extinguishers, adding a third protection for wood, paper or other combustible material fires.

To be serviceable, a portable extinguisher must have a pressure gauge indicating an operable range, lock pin firmly installed, clean discharge nozzle, and no significant corrosion or damage. Some more recently manufactured portable fire extinguishers aboard boats today may carry both old and new labeling, for example, having simultaneous “B-I” and “5-B” classifications.

There are no changes to rechargeable or fixed-mount (i.e., engine room) extinguisher regulations. They continue to require regular maintenance and servicing, typically done annually by a technician.