

**Fire Extinguishers, Emergency Switches and Emergency Items**

Southern Oregon University recommends the following for additional safety for Fire Extinguishers and Emergency Shut off Switches. These recommendations are to prevent further injury or damage to personnel or equipment.

**Purpose**

To define access to emergency items.

**Clearance:**

Required clearance in front of fire extinguishers or Emergency Shut Off Switches? OSHA nor NFPA have a definitive area that must remain clear in front of fire extinguishers. At [1910.157(c)(1)](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=50&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank), OSHA states only that you shall "mount, locate and identify (fire extinguishers) so that they are readily accessible to employees without subjecting the employees to possible injury." SOU defines this as unobstructed access. Reaching around under or over is not allowed. SOU also requires that fire extinguishers, emergency shut off switches and other items that are for emergency situations be unobstructed from view.

**Inspection Requirements:**

[NFPA 10 Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=59&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) states that fire extinguishers "shall be....readily accessible and immediately available in the event of fire." And also that "Fire extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured from view."

OSHA states at [1910.157(e)(1)](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=49&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) that "The employer shall be responsible for the inspection, maintenance, and testing of all portable fire extinguishers in the workplace." And at [1910.157(e)(2)](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=16&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) OSHA states that portable extinguishers shall be visually inspected monthly.

[1910.157(e)(3)](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=15&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) reads that you "shall assure that portable fire extinguishers are subjected to an annual maintenance check. Stored pressure extinguishers do not require an internal examination. The employer shall record the annual maintenance date and retain this record for one year after the last entry or the life of the shell, whichever is less."

**Location:**
At [1910.157(c)(1)](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=57&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) OSHA states only that you shall "mount, locate and identify ([fire extinguishers](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=13&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank)) so that they are readily accessible to employees without subjecting the employees to possible injury."

[NFPA 10 Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers](http://links.mkt1662.com/ctt?kn=72&m=34401089&r=MjA4ODQ0MDkyMQS2&b=0&j=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&mt=2&rj=NjA2ODk4ODQS1&rt=0" \t "_blank) states that units weighing 40 lbs. or less be installed such that the top of the unit is not more than five feet above the floor. For units weighing more than 40 pounds, the top of the unit should be no more than 3.5 feet above the floor. There should always be at least four inches between the bottom of the unit and the floor.

**Emergency Exit Requirements:**

Every workplace must have enough exits suitably located to enable everyone to evacuate the facility safely during an emergency. Considerations include the type of structure, the number of persons exposed, the fire protection available, the type of industry involved, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure. Fire doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside. Exit routes from buildings must be free of obstructions, have adequate lighting, and be properly marked with exit signs. See OAR 437-002-0041