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FIRE SAFETY: TIME FOR SPRING CLEANING

Clean Up and Be Safe; Time to Focus on Fire Extinguisher Education

April 10, 2007 (Cleveland, OH) -- It's that time of year when we can shed the winter hats, coats, and gloves and focus on cleaning up and renewing our fire safety plans. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), a structure fire is reported every 62 seconds and a fire death occurs every 2 hours and 23 minutes. Are you prepared in the event of a fire?

This year, the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association encourages everyone to focus on rituals that will improve fire safety in the workplace.

- 1) **Do some Spring cleaning** and take stock of storage areas and discard unneeded packaging, cardboard and paper. Sweep storage areas, server rooms, stockrooms and properly store hazardous materials. Make sure exit ways aren't blocked and clear areas at least three feet from electrical equipment and heat sources.
- 2) **Check your fire extinguishers.** Make sure there are fire extinguishers located throughout your workplace and inspect pressure gauges to make sure they are fully charged. If they are not charged, contact a local fire equipment service company in your phone book to help you.

Around your work area, assess where the closest fire extinguisher is located, as well as the standpipe fire hose station. Make sure they appear to be operational and not tampered with.

3) **Focus on education** and provide employees with information on how to use important fire equipment at www.fireextinguisher.com, www.rackhosetraining.com, and www.firesystemstraining.org. Take the time to learn about the critical role fire extinguishers play in fire safety: Download printable materials on fire extinguishers and post them in a central location at work. You may even consider hosting a fire safety training event with the local fire department. They can hold actual fire extinguisher demonstrations upon request.

The Role of Fire Extinguishers

Each year, there are approximately 1.6 million fires reported in the United States. These fires cause 3,600 deaths, 18,000 injuries, and \$10.7 billion in property damage every year, according to NFPA.

Portable fire extinguishers can mean the difference between life and death -- a single flame and a tragedy. When a fire is put out in the first three minutes, lives are saved and property loss is minimized. A portable fire extinguisher is your first defense against fire when it is small, contained and everyone is safe.

While fire extinguishers are inexpensive and do not take up much space, they do require that you know how to use one properly and that they be inspected every year to ensure they are still serviceable. Take notice if a fire extinguisher appears to be tampered with or damaged at work. Call a local fire extinguisher maintenance company to inspect the unit.

Portable fire extinguishers are an inexpensive insurance policy that hopefully, will never be used. But when a fire strikes, it is not the time to learn how to use one. Use the Spring

cleaning season as the time to focus on basic fire safety rituals, and take a moment for fire extinguisher education. It could save your life.

The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association is a non-profit trade association dedicated to saving lives and protecting property through balanced fire protection education. For more information about FEMA, visit www.femalifesafety.org.

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