



# Health and Safety in Farming

## HSNO brief for farmers – Fire extinguishers



### Fire extinguishers on farms

Fire extinguishers are required where farmers store fuels and other flammable products.

Having a fire extinguisher is a sensible safety precaution, as well as being a health and safety requirement. They provide a “first aid” measure and may allow people to limit damage by preventing minor fires from developing.

### When is a fire extinguisher needed?

This depends on the total amount of flammable products stored and how flammable they are.

As a general rule, you should provide fire extinguishers for all storage areas containing flammable products.

### How many fire extinguishers do I need?

The number of fire extinguishers depends on the flammability of the products stored.

Where several classes of flammable products are stored in the same place, the number of extinguishers must be the highest number specified for any one of the flammable classes. The maximum number of fire extinguishers required will never exceed two.

Most farmers will probably be required to have at least one and probably two extinguishers for their bulk fuel storage. They may also require extinguishers for large pesticide stores or other chemical storage areas.

As examples, you will need for:

- 50 to 200 litres of petrol, 1 extinguisher;
- more than 200 litres of petrol or 500 litres of diesel, 2 extinguishers;
- more than 250 litres of flammable pesticides (e.g. Lannate), 2 extinguishers;
- more than 50 kgs of LPG, 1 extinguisher.

If you have different types of products in the same store, you need to consider aggregate quantities. One product that is below the threshold may, on its own, not require an extinguisher. However, when combined with other flammable products, you may find the quantity threshold is exceeded.

### What type of fire extinguishers do I need?

The fire extinguisher’s capability is usually written on its side. The fire extinguisher you need must be capable of putting out a Class B flammable liquid fire and have a rating of at least 30B.

Either a 2 kg dry powder fire extinguisher or a 9 litre foam fire extinguisher is appropriate for both fuels and flammable agrichemicals.

## Location of fire extinguishers

The fire extinguisher should be fixed in an easily accessible and visible position. It should be close to the flammable product, but not so close that you can't get to it if there is a fire.

Consider the most practical options when locating the extinguisher. It should be no more than 30 metres away from the store or fuel tank. At the same time, it needs to be in a place where you can get to it quickly in an emergency.

## Training

All staff who work in areas that contain flammable substances must know how to use a fire extinguisher.

The first thirty seconds after discovering a fire is critical. Within those few moments a decision to fight a fire must be made. Knowing when to fight and when to flee can mean the difference between life and death.

Staff should only use a fire extinguisher when it is safe to do so. They should always make sure they have a safe path to retreat from the fire. If in doubt, stand back!

## Further information

Fire extinguisher requirements for fuel storage can be found in the *Approved Practice Guide for Safe Above-Ground Fuel Storage on Farms*, available from: <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/publications/pdfs/ER-APG-03-1.pdf>

Fire extinguisher requirements for agrichemical storage can also be found in the New Zealand Standard NZS8409:2004; *Management of Agrichemicals*.

The hazardous properties of fuels, agrichemicals and other flammable products can be found on safety data sheets. You can get a safety data sheet for each of the products you use from your fuel or agrichemical suppliers.

Information is also available from the ERMA New Zealand Hazardous Substance Compliance Line 0800 376 234.

