



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

New Fire Extinguisher Regulation for Recreational Boats Effective April 20, 2022

The following is a synopsis of the new USCG regulation which is adopted from a BoatUS News article.

Newly added to recreational boat owners to-do list this spring will be to check all disposable (non-rechargeable) fire extinguisher dates of manufacture as well as the label for their U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) classification.

A new U.S. Coast Guard regulation comes into effect on April 20, 2022 for disposable fire extinguishers which mandates a 12-year expiration date from the date of manufacture.

Note: NEVER discard a charged fire extinguisher in your trash or recycling. This can create a hazardous situation. The DLA is investigating proper disposal options and you will be notified of this at a later time.

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 digits, as in 09, this means 2009. Additionally, while the new regulation does not change the type (USCG-rated) or quantity of USCG approved fire extinguishers aboard, **it does specify the new minimum Underwriter Laboratory (UL) classification** of extinguishers to be carried aboard vessels which is dependent on your boat's model year.

The new regulation involves the **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 that are less than 26 feet and model year 2017 or older may continue to carry older "B-I" or "B-II" disposable extinguishers as long as they have not reached 12 years of age since manufacture. When they do reach 12 years of age, 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.

Many retailers carry "10-B" class fire extinguishers, which may be a good choice as they exceed U.S. Coast Guard minimum carriage requirements for boats under 26 feet, while at the same time giving boaters more extinguishing coverage.

However, for boats 26 feet or greater, having one "10-B" aboard does not equal two 5-Bs. Only a "20-B" classification meets the requirement to carry two "5-B" extinguishers.

Number & type of fire extinguishers required with the new regulation:

It is strongly recommended to go beyond the regulation's minimum requirements. [The results from a Foundation-sponsored 'boat-burn'](#) showed that one extinguisher may give very little time to make an emergency call or potentially prepare to abandon your vessel (please watch the 5-minute video).

Many U.S. Coast Guard disposable fire extinguishers on the market today carry a dual B:C rating, able to douse both liquids and electrical fires, and some boat owners wisely prefer triple rated A:B:C extinguishers, adding a third protection for combustible fires.

Ensure your fire extinguishers are mounted in readily accessible locations — at points of egress, at the helm and/or near the engine and fuel supply. Burying them in the bottom of a compartment ensures they will be hard to reach when you need them the most. Familiarizing yourself with [the PASS method \(Point, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep\)](#) will prepare you for fighting a small fire aboard.

Proper Disposal of your expired marine fire extinguisher:

1. If you use a marina to store and service your boat, you can request that they check your fire extinguisher(s) and replace them if required.
2. If you will be checking your own fire extinguishers and discover that they have expired and need to be taken out of service, the DLA will email you the proper disposal instructions as soon as it's received.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1. Where can I find the recently published final rule on regulations for fire protection for recreational vessels?

A1. The rule can be found at the following [link](#).

Q2. How can I tell if a fire extinguisher is approved for use on boats?

A2. The label on the bottle will state "Marine Type – USCG Approved" (Underwriters Labs (UL) approves fire extinguishers on behalf of the USCG).

Q3. Are there any changes for when marine fire extinguishers are required or the number of extinguishers required?

A3. No. If your boat was required to carry a fire extinguisher, it is still required to do so under this new regulation. There is also no change to the quantity required.

Q4. Which recreational boats are required to carry marine fire extinguishers?

A4. All recreational boats with:

1. Permanently installed fuel tank(s), or
2. Spaces that are capable of trapping fumes, such as a
 - Closed compartment under thwarts and seats wherein portable fuel tanks may be stored.
 - Double bottom not sealed to the hull or that is not completely filled with flotation material.
 - Closed stowage compartment in which combustible or flammable materials is stowed.
 - Closed living space.