

Atomic Energy Education Society, Mumbai

Book: Honeycomb; Chapter: 8
Fire: Friend & Foe



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'THE FIRST HALF' – WHAT IS THERE TO READ?

- The second way of putting out a fire is by cutting off the oxygen supply. No oxygen means no fire. For example, small fires can be put out or smothered with a damp blanket or a sack. These can therefore be brought under control. One might have noticed that many a times, blankets are thrown over burning objects to put the fire. Carbondioxide Extinguisher is another way to extinguish fire.
- The third way is to reduce the flash temperature. It can be done by spraying water on a burning material which lowers down the temperature. However, water should not be used to put out an electrical fire or an oil fire. It is because the person might receive a major shock in the first case. And in the latter, flowing water carries the burning oil with it and thus can spread the fire easily. Here again, Carbon dioxide extinguisher is the best way to control electrical fire.

Types of Fire Extinguishers

Their uses and their colour coding according to BS EN 3 : 1996.

The contents of an extinguisher is indicated by a colour zone on the body of the extinguisher.



WATER

For wood, paper, textile and solid material fire
DO NOT USE on liquid, electrical or metal fires



POWDER

For liquid and electric fires
DO NOT USE on metal fires



FOAM

For use on liquid fires
DO NOT USE on electrical or metal fires



CARBON DIOXIDE

For liquid and electric fires
DO NOT USE on metal fires

'THE FIRST HALF' – WHAT IS THERE TO READ?

- Earlier people used to form human chains and pass buckets of water from ponds or wells to a blaze or to a burning site. These days, there are trained personnel to handle this. The trained team of firefighters is called fire brigade. They are skilled people to handle all kinds of fire and fire causing injuries. They cut off electricity supply, knock down dangerous walls, spray water and other materials to control the blaze. They have good knowledge of first-aid as well and are able to provide immediate help to people suffering from burn injuries or from the effects of smoke.
- It is to be noted that construction of buildings today require ensuring of fire prevention norms.
- Discovery of fire has indeed been a great boon to mankind. It is in fact one of the sources to nurture mankind and is one of the celebrated classical elements or physical elements of cosmic creation (Pancha Maha-Bhoota). Fire is also worshipped as God in many cultures around the globe. It is a dear friend as long as it is used properly, but can turn dangerous if it goes out of control.



Fig 1: A human chain to douse a fire



Fig 3: A TATA Fire Brigade

Fig 2: Pancha-Maha-Bhoota



The second way of putting out a fire is to prevent oxygen from reaching it. No supply of oxygen means no fire. Small fires can be put out or 'smothered' with a damp blanket or a sack. This stops oxygen reaching the burning material. Sometimes, carbon dioxide is used to extinguish fire. It does not allow oxygen to reach the burning material.

The third way of putting out a fire is to remove the heat. If the temperature can be brought down below the flash point, the fuel stops burning. You blow on a burning matchstick or a candle to put it out. In doing so, you remove the hot air around the flame bringing down its temperature below the flash point, and the candle goes out. Sometimes, water is sprayed on a fire. It absorbs heat from the burning fuel and lowers the temperature. The blanket of water also cuts off the supply of oxygen, and the fire is extinguished.

DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

SL NO	WORDS	MEANINGS
1	SMOTHERED	SUFFOCATED
2	EXTINGUISH	PUT OUT

DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

Some fires cannot be put out with water. If water is sprayed onto an oil fire, the oil will float to the top of the water and continue to burn. This can be very dangerous because water can flow quickly, carrying the burning oil with it and spreading the fire. Water should also not be used on fires caused by electrical appliances. The person spraying water might receive an electric shock and be killed. A carbon dioxide extinguisher is the best thing to fight an electrical fire.

We spend millions of rupees each year in fighting fires. And we spend more trying to find new ways of preventing fires from happening and getting out of control. On the whole, we have learnt rather well to control fire and put it to good use in our everyday life.

SL NO	WORDS	MEANINGS
1	SPRAYED	SPRINKLED
2	APPLIANCES	DEVICES
3	EXTINGUISHER	SHORT FOR FIRE EXTINGUISHER, AN EQUIPMENT USED TO STOP BURNING OF FIRE.

Long ago, there were no firemen. When fire broke out, everybody became a firefighter. People formed human chains (they still do if required) and passed buckets of water from a well or a pond to the blaze. Now there are laws about building construction which ensure that space is left between buildings to reduce the fire risk. Every new building, especially a public place, must ensure observance of fire prevention norms. Bands of firefighting workers with special equipment, known as fire brigades, are there to put out fires. Firefighters are highly trained people.

DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

SL NO	WORDS	MEANINGS
1	CHAINS	ROWS
2	ENSURE	MAKE SURE
3	OBSERVANCE	INSPECTION
4	PREVENTION	STOP SOMETHING FROM HAPPENING
5	BRIGADES	GROUPS
6	TRAINED	SKILLED

DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

SL NO	WORDS/ PHRASAL VERB	MEANINGS
1	POSSESS	OWN
2	SKILLS	TALENTS
3	KNOCK DOWN	STRIKE DOWN
4	AID	HELP
5	COPE	TO DEAL WITH
6	SETTLED	SECURED LIFE
7	MODE	WAY

They possess many skills. They cut off electricity supply, knock down dangerous walls, spray water and other materials to bring fire under control.

They are also trained in first aid so that they can help people suffering from burns or from the effects of smoke.

The discovery of fire and its uses helped early man to cope with nature better and gradually adopt a settled mode of life. Fire is still worshipped in many parts of the world. Fire is indeed a friend but, as we know, it can be a dangerous enemy once it gets out of control.