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Common Fire Extinguisher Issues

Fire extinguishers are designed to extinguish incipient stage fires. They also may serve as a life-saving device to escape to safety when a fire occurs. These life-saving devices can only do their job if they are functioning properly.

This safety talk identifies common issues associated with fire extinguishers. Following the best practices listed below can assist in mitigating these issues and ensure fire extinguishers remain ready to be used in an emergency.

Common Extinguisher Issues:

- Fire extinguisher bottle bottoms can rust, allowing for leaks and compromise.
- Partial deployment can leave fire extinguisher hoses susceptible to clogging over time. The extinguishing agent can remain in the hose and act as a plug.
- Pressure loss often serves as a byproduct of partial deployment.
- Seals and gaskets can disintegrate after long periods of non-use.
- Fire extinguishers left in contact with harsh environmental elements can lose pressure and result in faulty mechanical use.

Best Practices:

- Fire extinguishers should be inspected prior to work beginning. Documented monthly inspections should also occur.
- Fire extinguishers should be inspected and serviced by a third-party company each year.
- Bottles should be stored properly when not in use can protect their shells. Limiting contact with wet and metal surfaces can assist in rust prevention.
- Bottles should not be stored at extreme temperatures to avoid pressure loss.

- Fire extinguishers that have been partially deployed should be replaced and recharged before entering back into service.
- Safety pins should be present and in place to prevent accidental discharge.

Summary:

Fire extinguishers can be lifesaving, but it is easy to take them for granted when you see them in the work area every day without having to ever use them.

Proper maintenance schedules and inspections can ensure safe use when needed.

Failure to care for the equipment can result in injuries and incidents due to malfunction or failure when utilized in an emergency.

Always take time to ensure that any safety-related equipment is functioning properly prior to beginning work tasks.