

**Fire Extinguisher Requirements for the Recreational Boater  
New Regulations for DISPOSABLE UNITS effective April 20, 2022  
Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs**

**Q. What is new with the fire extinguisher regulations for recreational vessels?**

A. If your disposable (non-rechargeable) fire extinguisher has a date of manufacture stamped on the bottle (example: “05” means 2005), and it is older than 12 years, the extinguisher is considered expired and must be removed from service. Look for wording on the bottle stating, “This product must be removed from service within 12 years after date of manufacture”. The date of manufacture may also appear near the UL label on the side of the bottle.

**Q. Hasn’t there always been a law regarding the expiration of fire extinguishers?**

A. For many years, the National Fire Protection Association’s Standard NFPA 10 has recommended the removal and replacement of portable fire extinguishers once they reach 12 years of age. However, this standard was not recognized or enforceable by the U.S. Coast Guard and waterway authorities until this recent change to the Code of Federal Regulations.

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

A. The label on the bottle will state “Marine Type – USCG Approved”. Underwriters Labs approves fire extinguishers on behalf of the USCG. Fire extinguishers purchased for other types of vehicles such as RVs or other uses such as home and kitchen use will not meet the requirement Coast Guard carriage requirement.

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

A. 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.

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

A. All recreational boats with:

- Permanently installed fuel tank(s), or
- 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 living space.
  - Closed stowage compartment in which combustible or flammable materials is stowed.

**Q. How many USCG approved marine fire extinguishers do I need to have readily accessible onboard my boat?**

A. You are required to carry a quantity of 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B UL-rated USCG approved extinguishers as required in the chart shown here for recreational boats 65 feet in length and less. If your vessel is older than model year 2017, you may carry a B-I or B-II rated fire extinguisher instead, but you must replace them with a 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B when they are no longer good and serviceable.

All recreational vessels of model year 2018 and newer must carry 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B rated fire extinguishers that are date stamped. Vessels older than model year 2018 may carry either 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B rated fire extinguishers that are less than 12 years old or B-I or B-II rated fire extinguishers that are in good and serviceable condition.

<b>Boat model year of 2018 and newer.</b>		
<b>NOTE - may carry only 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B rated fire extinguishers with date stamp</b>		
<b>Length (feet)</b>	<b>Minimum number of 5-B, 10-B, or 20-B rated portable fire extinguishers required 1</b>	
	<b>If no fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space</b>	<b>If fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space</b>
<b>Under 26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>26 but less than 40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>40 up to 65</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>One 20-B rated portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers.</b>		

<b>Boat model year between 1953 and 2017</b>		
<b>NOTE - may carry either 5-B, 10-B, 20-B rated extinguishers with date stamp or B-I, B-II rated fire extinguishers</b>		
<b>Length (feet)</b>	<b>Minimum number of B-I/5-B/10-B, or B-II/20-B rated portable fire extinguishers required 1</b>	
	<b>If no fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space</b>	<b>If fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space</b>
<b>Under 26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>26 but less than 40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>40 up to 65</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>One 20-B/B-II rated portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B/B-I portable fire extinguishers</b>		

**Q. Are there any motorized recreational boats exempt from having to carry a fire extinguisher?**

A. Yes. If your boat is less than 26' feet in length, uses an outboard engine, fuel is in a portable fuel tank, and there are no areas within the boat where fuel vapors can be trapped, the boat is not required to have a fire extinguisher.

**Q. How must my marine fire extinguishers be maintained?**

A. Fire extinguishers must:

1. Be on board and readily accessible;
2. Be of an approved type;
3. Not be expired or appear to have been previously used; and
4. Be maintained in good and serviceable working condition, meaning:
  - (i) If the extinguisher has a pressure gauge reading or indicator it must be in the operable range or position;
  - (ii) The lock pin is firmly in place;
  - (iii) The discharge nozzle is clean and free of obstruction; and
  - (iv) The extinguisher does not show visible signs of significant corrosion or damage.

**Q. What should I do if the gauge on my unused fire extinguisher is in the red?**

A. If a fire extinguisher pressure gauge shows that the charge is in the red zone, a disposable fire extinguisher must be discarded and replaced. A rechargeable extinguisher must be serviced and tagged.

**Q. What is the difference between a rechargeable and non-rechargeable portable fire extinguisher?**

A11. A non-rechargeable fire extinguisher, also referred to as a disposable fire extinguisher, is intended for one-time use only. A rechargeable fire extinguisher is recharged once used. A rechargeable portable fire extinguisher requires regular maintenance and servicing; a disposable does not. A disposable must be removed from service after 12 years from date of manufacture stamped on the bottle. This new regulation only affects non-rechargeable fire extinguishers.

**Q. Where do I find the date of manufacture on a rechargeable fire extinguisher?**

A13. The date of manufacture on a rechargeable fire extinguisher is printed on the label of the bottle. The first National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) certified inspection is due one year from the date of manufacture and the bottle tag must indicate this inspection. A rechargeable does not need to be removed from service after 12 years, but it instead must be maintained annually by a technician.

**Q. I bought a fire extinguisher and in the box is a plastic mounting bracket. The label on the fire extinguisher bottle says it is valid only with bracket. Do I need to mount the fire extinguisher using this bracket?**

A. It is highly recommended to mount the fire extinguisher, but it is not a requirement to mount the fire extinguisher. All portable extinguishers must be readily accessible. Mounting a fire extinguisher near the helm, engine, galley, and interior hatches and ladders are all good places to consider.

**Q. So in a nutshell, disposable fire extinguishers now expire and there is new labeling?**

A. Yes, although that is a simplified summary. For a several years now, fire extinguishers have featured the stamped manufacture date on the bottle and the labels have included the 5, 10 and 20 size designations. BI and BII only designations are going away; replace as needed or indicated.

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

A. The rule may be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/10/22/2021-22578/fire-protection-for-recreational-vessels#sectno-reference-175.320> . These regulations will be incorporated into 33 CFR Chapter 1, Sub-Chapter S in the near future.