

Common Myth #12

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It's OK to continue servicing old extinguishers as long as I can get parts that fit, or figure out how to make it work.

Description

"If there is any doubt in your mind that the extinguisher is going to work, don't put it into service." –

R.V. Voelkert

This depends upon the availability of parts FROM THE MANUFACTURER. If the manufacturer is no longer in business (Fyr-Fyter , Stop-Fire, Norris, Power- Pak, RC Industries) or if the manufacturer no longer provides parts for that model, it should be removed.

The use of non-original manufacturer's parts is addressed in Amerex Tech Tip #1. Who is going to warranty these parts? When they fail and an extra trip is required to fix a leaker, what have you gained? If the parts are questionable, how is the extinguisher going to perform? In the end, are you really doing your customer any favors? Are you providing the best fire protection possible?

There are some other issues at stake here. How long is an extinguisher good? 12 years, 20 years, 30 years? At what point has it served its purpose?

NFPA 10 in 4.4.1 requires Dry chemical stored pressure extinguishers made before October 1984 to be replaced. 4.4.2 requires any extinguisher that cannot be maintained in accordance with its manual must be replace. What are the oldest water and CO2 extinguishers that you see out there? Do they have the right valve, siphon tube, gauge, safety disc assembly, UL nameplate?

We have always found it curious that some Fire Departments will spend \$300,000 on a new fire truck, complete with gold leaf striping, and put a 30 or 40 year old fire extinguisher on the truck. Meanwhile, we think nothing of spending several hundred dollars every couple of years for a new cell phone – or two to three times that for a new computer.

For whatever the reason, a \$150.00 fire extinguisher is expected to last 30 years or more. This is not only illogical, but poor fire protection.

These aren't expensive pieces of equipment, but when they are needed THEY HAVE TO WORK PROPERLY. Why take the chance on trying to keep old units alive with non-original parts?