



January 5 — False Protection Hazard

Contractors working on pump piping had an extinguisher that had been spent.	I exchanged it out for them
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The extinguisher looked like a control, but it wasn't one anymore. That's what makes this dangerous. People see the extinguisher and assume the hazard is covered, when in reality the protection is gone. In an emergency, that delay realizing it's empty, finding another one, or trying to improvise is often the difference between a small incident and a big one.

**A red can there may look just right,
Till you squeeze the handle nothing fights.
Check it first before you trust,
Or flames will do just what they must.**

A control that doesn't work is worse than no control at all, because it changes behavior without providing protection.

Hazards

- Inability to control a fire during early ignition
- Escalation from small fire to large fire
- Increased risk to workers attempting suppression
- Delay in emergency response
- Damage to equipment and infrastructure

Stats

- Fire extinguishers are only effective in the earliest stage of a fire
- Delayed suppression greatly increases fire severity and spread
- Many emergency equipment failures are discovered **only when needed**
- Inoperable safety equipment is a frequent finding during incident investigations

Words of Wisdom

- A dead extinguisher is just wall art.
- If it's not ready, it's not a control.

Pause and Think

Emergency equipment is easy to ignore because it's meant to be used rarely. That's why it has to be checked often. People change their behavior based on what they believe is available. When a control looks present but isn't functional, it encourages risk without providing backup.

- When was the last time this extinguisher was checked?
- How do we verify emergency equipment is actually ready?
- What's the plan if the first control fails?