Classifications for portable fire extinguishers

Starting with Class B because I think it’s a bit easier...

There are 9 ratings for Class B fire extinguishers - 21B through to 233B. The rating number refers to the size of fire that can be extinguished under test conditions.

The test method involves adding water and fuel to circular metal trays (to specified sizes) before igniting and extinguishing the fire.

A 55B test will see 1/3 water and 2/3 fuel mixed to a volume of 55 litres. This will create a 10mm layer of water and 20mm of fuel in a circular tray of 1.4m in diameter – (about the size of small garden paddling pool to give a rough idea).

The rating numbers increase to denote the volume of liquid in the test fires.

The higher the rating the increased size of fire the extinguisher can extinguish in test conditions.

It’s easier to see the relationship between the increasing fire ratings if you convert them into percentages, as ratings 183B to 233B won’t immediately tell you of a 27% increase in capacity, which is worth keeping in mind if you’re comparing prices without drilling down to check specifications.

"Paying a bit more for an extinguisher with a superior fire rating, should feature in considerations about additional protection and better value!"