



## Fire Extinguishers

by *Eric Smyder*

While I was never a Boy Scout but I like to be prepared. What is the worst thing that can happen to you while merrily rolling down the road in your classic Sunbeam? We try to keep our cars in top running condition, but things can happen without warning, a flat tire, a breakdown, getting overtaken by a lesser Marque, rain with the top down. What about a FIRE? These days you can grab your cell phone for a tow if you break down. You can always clean up after the rain. If your classic car catches fire then you only have seconds to react. I've seen fires on the turnpike billowing black smoke for miles as the fire totally consumes the car and leaves only an unrecognizable lump of blackened metal.

Fires can be started from a variety of sources. They can be electrically sparked,

caused by fuel leaks, etc. You have to have the right extinguisher for the job.

**Class A** extinguishers are for ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood, cardboard, and most plastics. These pressurized water types won't do you much good in a fuel or electrical fire.

**Class B** fires involve flammable or combustible liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, grease and oil. It is essential to have a Class B rated extinguisher in your car.

**Class C** fires involve electrical equipment, such as appliances, wiring, circuit breakers and outlets. The C classification means the extinguishing agent is nonconductive. You wouldn't want to use a Class A water extinguisher on Class C fire... it could be a shocking experience.

I'll mention **Class D**, but this classification is for special condi-

tions involving combustible metals such as Magnesium, Sodium, etc. Most general purpose extinguishers are rated ABC, which is good for all the above except D.

Mono-Ammonium Phosphate is the main chemical ingredient in **ABC** dry chemical extinguishers, which leaves a yellow sticky residue.

The BC type of dry chemical extinguisher generally uses Sodium Bicarbonate, which is less damaging to certain materials, but still corrosive. While using one of these is better than watching your car burn, they can leave unpleasant chemical residues that should be washed off. A Carbon Dioxide extinguisher rated BC simply removes the oxygen, and won't leave a residue, but could allow the fire to re-ignite. Keep applying

this extinguisher even if the fire appears to be out.

Halon extinguishers are more expensive and also will not leave a residue, but they have a limited range.

I carry extinguishers in both our Imps, and I'm even working on a setup to carry one on my Sunbeam S7 motorcycle (which is notorious for leaky carbs). Why take a chance? The charred electrical harness of Valerie's car is a reason enough to decide to carry an extinguisher in the car.

The extinguisher should be easy to reach. If you have to rummage in the boot to find it, it may be too late. I have one mounted under the dash in my Imp, and behind the driver's seat in Valerie's. Be prepared. PULL the pin, AIM, SQUEEZE, and SWEEP back and forth. The car you save may be your own.

