

A fire hazard is automatically detected and a fire is prevented or extinguished in an automotive vehicle upon such vehicle being involved in a collision. The vehicle has an air conditioning system including a container and employing CO₂ as a refrigerant. The occurrence of a collision is detected by an impact sensor. In response to detection of the collision by such a sensor, a processing/control unit opens a valve in a line connected to an outlet at or near a bottom of the container. Thereby, the CO₂ refrigerant is released substantially in liquid phase from the container and passed through the line and is discharged as a fire extinguishing agent into various parts of the vehicle, for example the engine compartment.