

Fire Extinguishers

A. Maintenance, Inspection and Testing Requirements

Fire extinguishers must be recharged *annually* and whenever the service seal has been broken or an inspection indicates that the extinguisher might fail to function. This service to include a full breakdown of all elements of the extinguisher, which encompasses a visual inspection of the shell both internally and externally. Upon servicing, the extinguisher must have an approved tag from a licensed company affixed to it, again internally and externally, before it can be placed back into service. (See sample). (NSFMR 477.410).

Fire extinguishers must be inspected *monthly*. This inspection consists of a “quick-check” assuring that a fire extinguisher is available and will operate. It is intended to give reasonable assurance that the fire extinguisher is fully charged and operable. This is done by verifying that the extinguisher is in its designated place, that it has not been actuated or tampered with, and that there is no obvious physical damage or condition to prevent its operation. (NFPA 10-1.3 & OSHA 1910-157d2). This can be performed by on site property personnel.

Fire extinguishers shall be hydrotested every *twelve* years. This service to be performed by a licensed fire protection company, and tested in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. The date of manufacture and subsequent hydrotest are indicated on the outer shell of the extinguisher. Once the test is complete, a self adhesive label must be affixed indicating test pressure and date of test.. (NSFMR 477.415).

B. Common Problems & Solutions

1. *Problem:* Maintenance staff neglect monthly visual inspection of fire extinguishers and cabinets, thus resulting in the overlooking of discharged or missing extinguishers, broken glass in cabinets, damaged extinguishers and or cabinets.

Solution: As required by OSHA, maintenance staff should walk property monthly, providing a written report indicating the location and condition of each extinguisher. Further, affix an external inspection tag indicating the date of inspection and the initials of the maintenance personnel performing the task. (See samples).

2. ***Problem:*** “Stockpiling” of extinguishers and or cabinets in need of service, in an effort to avoid having the fire protection company make continual visits to your property.

Solution: Require maintenance staff to notify management immediately upon the discovery of a problem, as that extinguisher and/or cabinet are, in effect, “out of service” until service has been performed. Also, maintain a small supply of spare extinguishers and cabinet glass for the staff to make necessary replacements, until the fire protection company can be notified.

3. ***Problem:*** Improper use of a fire extinguisher, in the event of an incident.

Solution: Request the fire protection company to provide a training seminar for all staff *semi-annually*, to include a live fire and the opportunity for all personnel to receive “hands-on” experience in the proper use of a fire extinguisher.