Fire Extinguisher Inspections & Testing

Annual Inspection Certification

Fire extinguishers must be *certified* annually in accordance with local, state, and national codes and regulations. This is a thorough examination by a licensed Fire Extinguisher Inspector. The certification process requires inspectors to verify the extinguisher is fully pressurized, free from damage, and weighed appropriately. Annual inspections also require a pull test on the pin and seal replacement—this must be verified with a dated inspection tag. If the extinguisher fails to meet these requirements, it must be replaced.

Fire Extinguisher Testing

The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) recommends that extinguishers should be *tested* every six years or twelve years, depending on the type of extinguisher.

6 Year Maintenance: Extinguishers that store a pressurized agent must have its contents removed and refilled every 6 years. 6 year maintenance requires thorough inspection of the inside and outside and must be performed exactly 72 months after the manufacturing date.

12 Year Maintenance: Extinguishers which store specialized chemicals such as Halon or dry chemicals must undergo "hydrostatic" tests every 12 years. This standard method of testing is conducted underwater where the cylinders are subjected to pressures that exceed their ratings. Extinguishers that fail the test are destroyed, while the rest are reassembled and put back into service.

Monthly Inspections are required to ensure that all extinguishers are ready for use. They are performed by trained, competent individuals within the company, many times the Safety Director, or another like-minded individual.

A monthly inspection includes:

- Confirming the extinguisher is visible, unobstructed, and in its designated location.
- Verifying the pull pin is intact and the tamper seal is unbroken.
- Examining the extinguisher for obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage, or severe denting.
- Tapping the pressure gauge to confirm the gauge and indicator is in the operable range/position.
- Turning the extinguisher upside down and pounding it on the side to loosen the powder inside.
- Completely removing the hose from the unit to check for blockages.
- While the hose is off, inspecting the valve assembly for powder caking or buildup.
- Making sure the operating instructions on the nameplate are legible and facing outward.
- Checking the service tag to ensure it is legible and the punched date is within the last 12 months.
- Initialing and dating the back of the tag to show the inspection was completed.



