

FIRE EXTINGUISHER INSPECTION TAG REQUIREMENTS

Keeping your workplace safe means maintaining the highest standards. And OSHA standards require that all portable fire extinguishers used in the workplace must be maintained and inspected regularly. The fire extinguisher or hose must be visually inspected monthly and be subjected to an annual maintenance test. In doing this, the employer must record the annual maintenance date on a tag and retain this record one year after the last entry or for the life of the shell (whichever is less).



Federal Standards

The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) requires all portable extinguishers to undergo four categories of inspections: monthly, annual, six-year and periodic hydrostatic material inspection. All inspections must be recorded on one or more tags on the fire extinguisher. The NFPA also advises that you keep a separate inspection log. Additional standards are governed by OSHA and state codes.



Monthly Visual Inspections

Monthly visual inspections ensure that your fire extinguisher operates effectively and is stored and mounted properly. These inspections should be performed by an authorized member of a company's safety personnel or the homeowner and ensure that the extinguisher is undamaged, the hose is not blocked, the safety seal is unbroken, the pressure gauge is fully charged and the operating instructions are legible.



Annual Maintenance

Annual maintenance must include an examination of the mechanical parts, the fire-suppression agent and the delivery system. Because of the more technical aspect of annual inspections, they should be done and certified by a professional and recorded on a fire extinguisher tag, which should include the inspection date and the inspector's initials.

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Hydrostatic Testing

Hydrostatic materials inspection requirements vary by type of extinguisher. Pressurized water, carbon dioxide and wet-chemical extinguishers require five-year inspections. Dry-chemical extinguishers must be inspected every 12 years. Because these inspections are more involved, they must be done by professionals with specific training in handling the fire-extinguishing agents. Certified inspectors should recharge and seal the extinguisher once the testing has been done.

Five-year and 12-year inspections should be recorded on a tag and attached to the cylinder. For each extinguisher in the workplace, you must record the name and signature of the person or agency who performed the test, the test date and the serial number or identifier of the fire extinguisher that was tested. This information should be securely fixed to each extinguisher and provided upon request to the Assistant Secretary as evidence that the testing has been performed.



Six-Year Inspections

According to NFPA 10, every six years, stored-pressure fire extinguishers that require a 12-year hydrostatic test shall be emptied and examined according to the manufacturer's service manual. A licensed professional must examine the mechanics of the extinguisher, including the outlet hose and delivery system. After this is done, the extinguisher should be refilled, re-pressurized and marked with a tamper-resistant seal. After the inspection is completed, it should be recorded on a durable weather-proof label that is a minimum of 2 in. x 3 1/2 in. (51mm x 89mm) that is attached to the body of the fire extinguisher. The date of the inspection, the inspector's name and the affiliated company should be noted.