

# COMPLIANCE GUIDE

## Fire Extinguisher Inspection Tag Requirements

OSHA standards dictate that all portable fire extinguishers used in the workplace must be maintained and inspected regularly.\* Specifically, the fire extinguisher or hose must be visually inspected monthly, and be subjected to an annual maintenance test. In doing so, the employer must record the annual maintenance date on a tag and retain this record for one year after the last entry or 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 inspections. All inspections must be recorded on one or more tags on the fire extinguisher. The NFPA also advises to keep a separate inspection log. Additional standards are governed by OSHA and state codes.



### ■ Monthly Visual Inspections

Monthly visual inspections are vital in ensuring that your fire extinguisher operates effectively and is stored and mounted properly. These inspections must be performed by an authorized member of a company's safety personnel or the homeowner. Inspections ensure that the extinguisher is undamaged, the hose is not blocked, the safety seal is unbroken, the pressure gauge is fully charged, and that the operating instructions are legible. Inspection tags should note that the extinguisher has been inspected, the date it was inspected, and by whom it was inspected.

## ■ Annual Maintenance

Annual maintenance should include an examination of the mechanical parts, the fire-suppression agent and the delivery system. Because of the more technical nature of annual inspections, they must 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.



## ■ Six-Year Inspections

Six-year maintenance inspections are similar to annual inspections. However, during six-year inspections, stored-pressure fire extinguishers must be emptied of contents. A licensed professional must examine the mechanics of the extinguisher, including the outlet hose and delivery system. Once this is done, the extinguisher should be refilled, repressurized and marked with a tamper-resistant seal. After the inspection is completed, it should be recorded on a tag and on a separate metallic label attached to the body of the fire extinguisher. The month and date of the inspection, the inspector's name and the company affiliation should be noted.



\*OSHA explicitly states that employers who provide portable fire extinguishers for employee use in the workplace must provide an educational program to familiarize them with the general principles of fire extinguisher use and the hazards involved with incipient stage firefighting. This training should be provided annually.

## ■ 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. Due to these inspections being more involved, they should be done by professionals with particular training in handling the fire-extinguishing agents. Certified inspectors must recharge and seal the extinguisher once the testing has been completed.

Five-year and 12-year inspections should be recorded on the 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.