



# Fire Protection Testing Guide



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## Having a well maintained, modern fire alarm system is essential to a safe working and living environment.

Having fire protection isn't enough; ensuring fire safety equipment is well maintained and regularly tested by a 'responsible person' is also essential by law, with severe penalties for non-compliance.

How often should you test fire alarms, and other fire safety equipment? How frequently your fire safety equipment is checked, tested and serviced all depends on the type of equipment you have and where you keep it.

The recent Fire Safety Act 2021 places significant responsibilities on building owners and Facility Managers, or 'Responsible Persons,' based on the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower inquiry.

Alongside six monthly service inspections (as a minimum) you are legally required to run weekly fire alarm tests, as governed by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) and BS 5839-6: 2019 standards.

To ensure compliance, a weekly 'spot check' test should be carried out by a competent or 'responsible person' at approximately the same time of day every week. All results, including the location of the call-point tested, should be recorded in a log book.

### EQUIPMENT TYPES

Fire safety equipment that may need regular checks, testing or servicing, INCLUDES:

- FIRE ALARMS
- EMERGENCY LIGHTING
- FIRE EXTINGUISHERS
- FIRE DOORS
- CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS
- SPRINKLER SYSTEMS
- DRY AND WET RISERS
- MEANS OF ESCAPE

Daily ► Weekly ► Monthly ► Bi-Annually ► Annually

## DAILY CHECKS

Visually check the fire alarm system's panel daily to ensure that no faults are indicated. The panel should be showing that all indicators are 'normal'. Smoke alarms should be visually checked for damage. Make sure you check that previous faults have been rectified. Any previous faults identified need to have been acknowledged and logged as resolved.



## FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

On a weekly basis, the fire alarm system should be tested from a different call point, taken in turn, ensuring that all equipment attached to the alarm activates (such as sounders, smoke vents, disabled equipment). Also check that any doors fitted with automatic releases are activated by automatic fire detection and alarm system, and that all lifts return to the ground floor.



## OTHER EQUIPMENT

### FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

All fire extinguishers should be in place and visible with no obstructions present. Make sure that they are in the right location and that the tag and safety clip are in place. Fire hydrants outside should be checked for accessibility, nothing should be blocking their path (such as vehicles).

### DRY AND WET RISERS

Ensure that the points aren't blocked, check that the water supply is sufficient, record findings in the fire log book and report any defects to the responsible person.

### SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Ensure that the points aren't blocked, check that the water supply is sufficient, record findings in the fire log book and report any defects.

### ESCAPE ROUTES

All fire exits should be able to be opened easily, with no obstructions in the way. The emergency fastening devices (push bars etc.) should be working correctly and escape routes should be clear (make sure there is signage in place.) don't forget your external fire escape routes.



## FIRE DOORS

First of all, keep a register of all your fire doors with each of them having an id. Inspect each door: is the seal intact? Is the closer working? If the door has a door guard, is it working? It may seem obvious, but don't forget to check external doors as well.

## CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Test the unit by pushing the test button, record the test in the fire log book and record the date when the batteries were last changed.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Fire extinguishers should be checked fully every month. All fire extinguishers should have their pressure gauges checked monthly, they should be in the correct location, checked for any damage and they should be charged.

## EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Do a monthly test (or flick test): check the led light is on, use a test point, check that the light works. It is important to keep a record of all monthly tests, including any faults which will have to be reported to the responsible person.

**IMPORTANT:** Failure to comply with these regulations can put lives at risk and incur severe penalties. As well as fire alarm testing, there is a legal responsibility to complete monthly emergency light testing. This is to make sure systems are in good condition and will properly and where relevant, automatically, operate during emergency situations. It is the duty of responsible persons to ensure monthly testing of emergency lighting systems, under BS 5266 part 8 (EN50172).

The duration of the test should be sufficient to ensure the luminaire operates correctly, whilst minimising any damage to the system components, E.G. Lamps, battery. The result of monthly emergency lighting testing must be recorded in a specified log-book and if failures are established, these must be resolved as soon as possible.



## **DRY & WET RISERS**

BS9990:2015 requires dry and also where legally required, wet risers (for any building that is above 60m in height) to be tested under pressure annually with a visual inspection every six months and serviced bi-annually.

## **FIRE ALARM SYSTEM**

Fire alarms should be tested in line with BS5839-1:2017, usually every 6 months or quarterly according to the size of your premises. This involves testing all of your alarm devices throughout a twelve-month period, along with door closers & smoke vents. Any defects should be noted and reported as part of a compliant service report.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Fire drills with a full or part evacuation should take place every six months. However, some other premises (such as schools) are required to have fire drills more often. Your evacuation procedure should take no more than 2-3 minutes. Smoke alarms should be tested, and if battery-powered, batteries should be changed every 6 months to ensure they are fully reliable

## **FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT**

Fire hose reels should be tested every 6 months for damage and wear. Fire blankets should also be checked bi-annually to ensure that they are effective.



## SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Systems should be serviced in line with BS9251:2014, whereby if no defects are reported, a renewed certificate of compliance will be received.

## FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Fire extinguishers should be serviced once a year in line with BS5306-3:2017. This includes reporting any remedial works that are required, which should be noted in a dedicated service report and resolved.

## EMERGENCY LIGHTING

You are required to have a 3-hour emergency lighting test once a year, during which your main light circuit should be switched off and your emergency lights left on for a 3-hour period in line with BS5266-1:2016. Any defects should be reported and resolved as soon as possible.

Amthal offers dedicated fire safety equipment service contracts, individually designed to suit bespoke property requirements, working closely with Responsible Persons to ensure the safety of any premises.

If you'd like further advice on how often you should check your fire safety equipment, or specific guidance on setting up fire safety checks processes and protocols for your specific building(s), then please get in touch.

There's a lot of information to take in when it comes to understanding how often you should test your fire alarm system, and other fire safety equipment. As well as the content previously written in this article, we have produced a quick-reference table for fire safety equipment testing – which you can view on the next page.

## Fire Safety Equipment Testing

### Quick-reference Table

<b>Daily</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual inspection of the fire alarm system panel (ensuring any previously logged faults have been rectified)</li> </ul>
<b>Weekly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly fire alarm system testing from different call points (including accessories, doors and lifts)</li> <li>• Fire extinguishers – check they are present and not obstructed</li> <li>• Sprinkler systems – check they aren't blocked and that water supply is sufficient</li> <li>• Dry and wet risers – check they aren't blocked and that water supply is sufficient</li> <li>• Escape routes – check they aren't obstructed and that equipment is in full working order, with signage in place</li> </ul>
<b>Monthly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency lighting – monthly flick test</li> <li>• Fire extinguishers – full check, including pressure gauge and charging</li> <li>• Fire doors – check seals, closers and door guards</li> <li>• Carbon Monoxide detectors – push the 'test' button and record results in the log book, including a note on when batteries were last changed</li> </ul>
<b>Bi-Annual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry and wet risers - BS9990:2015 requirements; tested under pressure alternated with visual checks</li> <li>• Fire drills – evacuation drill (required more frequently in some locations)</li> <li>• Fire alarm system - BS5839-1:2017 testing requirements</li> <li>• Fire-fighting equipment – hose reels and fire blankets</li> </ul>
<b>Annual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency lighting – 3 hour test in line with BS5266-1:2016</li> <li>• Firefighting equipment – servicing in line with BS5306-3:2017</li> <li>• Sprinkler systems – servicing in line with BS9251:2014, aiming for certificate of compliance renewal</li> </ul>



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