

## Servicing Fire Extinguishers - A Guide for Consumers

Fire Extinguishers installed in all commercial buildings (offices, retail stores, warehouses, factories, etc.), in public buildings (hospitals, schools, universities, theatres, etc.) and multi-occupancy residential buildings all need to be regularly inspected and tested. The inspection, test and maintenance regime for fire extinguishers is specified in the Australia Standard AS 1851 *Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems and Equipment*.

There are some key points that property owners, property managers, tenants and the general community should be aware of to ensure they receive the appropriate level of service including being aware of what they are being charged for. The following provides some guidelines to assist in receiving the correct servicing of fire extinguishers:

### Servicing Requirements

- All extinguishers have to be inspected at six monthly intervals and if they don't have a pressure gauge, they may need to be weighed to check they are still full. Some extinguisher types may require additional tasks to be carried out annually.

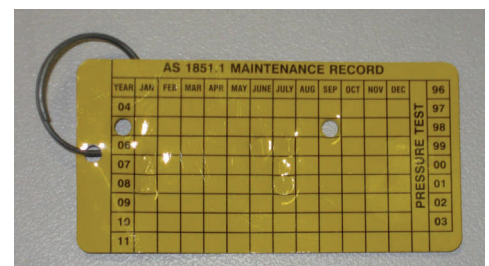
**Extinguishers need to be emptied, pressure tested and refilled every five years.**

There may be other servicing requirements at 3, 5 or 6 years.

- The tests and intervals are to be recorded on a label or metal tag attached to the unit.
- No other work is required, provided that the visual inspection of the extinguisher shows that it is in a serviceable condition, unless the gauge indicates the unit is under pressure or the weight is too low. Any additional work needed must be approved by the client before being carried out. **Extinguishers must, however, be refilled, even if only partially discharged, between the five year services.**



If a fire extinguisher does not have a pressure gauge, it may have to be weighed to ensure it is still full.



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Servicing technicians need to identify themselves to a receptionist before proceeding to undertake any work.



Get the service personnel to sign off all necessary documentation and ensure they explain what service work they are charging for.



Establish an agreement with one company to provide regular fire extinguisher service requirements.

## Servicing Personnel

- Servicing technicians need to identify themselves to a receptionist, member of staff or person responsible for building security before proceeding to undertake any work. Always check their ID, even if they are wearing some type of uniform, and ensure they are from your regular service provider if you have one.
- Extinguisher servicing companies and their technicians have no authority to enforce legislation and make threat of fines or prosecution. FPA Australia strongly recommends any person making such claims and/or engaging in intimidating tactics be ordered to leave the premises immediately.
- If a service technician you have not dealt with before advises that an existing fire extinguisher is of the wrong type, request an explanation why and seek another opinion if not satisfied with the explanation.
- Get the service personnel to sign off all necessary documentation and ensure they explain what service work they are charging for. A reputable company will be happy to explain the work being charged for and provide appropriate customer service.
- Small and large service companies carry out extinguisher servicing. Only in Queensland do the service technicians need to be licensed.
- There are courses in extinguisher maintenance available nationally and, whilst they are not compulsory, you may wish to ask if the extinguisher maintenance person working on your premises has these qualifications.
- FPA Australia strongly recommends establishing an agreement with one company to provide the regular fire extinguisher servicing requirements and to ensure it is only technicians from that company that undertakes work on your extinguishers.

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