



23. Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Fire Shutters & Curtains Functional Test

Category:	Fire
Subcategory:	Extinguishing Equipment
Frequency:	6 Monthly
Status:	Statutory
Type:	Competent Person
Priority:	Core
Commonality:	Occasional

Note: This document provides guidance to support compliance but is not a substitute for professional advice.

Why This Task Matters

Your twice-yearly functional testing of fire shutters and curtains ensures that automatic barriers deploy reliably to protect escape routes. By conducting these interim checks in dining halls, stages, or science prep areas, you maintain confidence that compartmentation systems will activate correctly during an emergency. Your systematic testing of these critical safety barriers demonstrates your essential role in maintaining effective fire separation.

Task Summary

Statutory: Twice-yearly functional testing ensures fire shutters and curtains activate properly and close fully when triggered. This intermediate testing involves checking deployment mechanisms, verifying control systems, and inspecting for any obvious faults. The test includes checking fusible links, testing manual controls, and verifying full closure of barriers. This protects compartmentation lines such as kitchens, stages, or science prep areas, maintaining safe evacuation routes for pupils and staff. Interim checks reduce the risk of undetected faults developing between contractor visits. The testing includes documenting system operation, checking for damage or obstructions, and ensuring all components function correctly. Evidence produced includes signed test logs documenting all checks performed and results, annotated photos showing barrier deployment and closure, and any issues

identified with recommended actions.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:** Requires regular testing of fire barrier systems
- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B (Buildings other than dwellinghouses):** Provides guidance on fire barrier testing
- **British Standard BS 8524: Active fire curtain barrier assemblies:** Specifies requirements for fire curtain testing and maintenance
- **British Standard BS 9999: Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings - Code of practice:** Includes guidance on routine testing procedures
- **Building Regulations 2010:** Require fire barriers to be maintained in working order

Typical Frequency

Fire shutters and curtains must be functionally tested every six months, with these intermediate checks continuing throughout the academic year. In educational settings with fire barriers, six-monthly testing is essential for maintaining system reliability. The frequency cannot be reduced as it is a statutory requirement for ensuring automatic fire barriers remain operational.

Applicability

This task applies to educational establishments that have fire shutters or curtains installed, which is occasional as these systems are typically found in specific high-risk areas. It is a core statutory task where these systems are present, essential for maintaining fire compartmentation. The task applies to schools and colleges with fire shutters in stairwells, fire curtains in auditoriums or dining areas, and similar barrier systems.

Responsible Persons

- **Task Type:** Competent Person
- **In-House Requirements:** This task can be completed by trained facilities staff or fire safety officers who have received appropriate training in fire barrier system testing. Staff should be familiar with the system's operation and testing procedures.
- **Permit to Work:** May require coordination with building users during testing.
- **Delivery Model:** Normally completed in-house by trained staff to ensure regular testing and familiarity with the system.

Key Considerations

- **Timing considerations:** Schedule during term time to maintain continuous system reliability
- **Cost implications:** Minimal cost if completed in-house, though may require occasional staff training
- **Resource requirements:** Access to control systems and barrier locations
- **Potential disruption:** May require temporary area isolation during testing
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Test results should inform the fire risk assessment

Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure tester is familiar with the fire barrier system and testing procedures
- Confirm testing can be conducted without endangering building occupants
- Check that emergency procedures are in place during testing
- Inform relevant staff about potential barrier activation

Tools & Materials

- System documentation and test procedures
- Access keys and security codes for control systems
- Test equipment for verifying operation
- Logbook for recording test results
- Camera for documenting barrier operation

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Pre-Test Preparation

1. Review previous test results and any outstanding issues
2. Check system status indicators and control panels
3. Confirm testing schedule and safety procedures
4. Prepare test documentation forms

Phase B: System Status Check

1. Verify control system displays normal status
2. Check fusible links and detection systems
3. Inspect visible components for damage or obstructions

4. Confirm integration with fire alarm systems
5. Test system monitoring and fault indicators

Phase C: Functional Testing

1. Test manual activation controls
2. Verify automatic activation from fire alarm signals
3. Check barrier deployment speed and full closure
4. Test reset and reopening mechanisms
5. Confirm system status indicators and alarms

Phase D: Documentation

1. Record test date, time, and staff conducting test
2. Document system operation and response times
3. Photograph barrier deployment and closure
4. Note any issues or unusual observations
5. Sign and date the test log

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- Control systems must display normal status
- Barrier deployment must occur within design time limits
- Full closure must be achieved without gaps
- System must reset correctly after testing

If Results Fail

Follow instructions on the Compliance Pod task completion form to record remedial/follow up actions and generate Reactive Task Tickets as required. Immediately isolate faulty systems and implement alternative fire safety measures. Escalate issues to facilities management and arrange urgent contractor attention. Monitor affected areas closely until systems are restored.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

Reset the system to normal operation and remove any temporary barriers. Ensure control systems show correct status.

Completion Checks

Verify that the test log is complete with all required details. Confirm that the system returned to normal operation after testing. Ensure photographic evidence shows proper operation.

Record-Keeping & Evidence

- **Upload Process:** Upload any required statutory or supporting evidence to the corresponding task form in Compliance Pod.
- **Statutory Evidence:** Signed test logs and annotated photos must be retained for at least 3 years.
- **Supporting/Good Practice Evidence:** Detailed test observations and photographic records support audit readiness.

Common Pitfalls & Best Practice Tips

- **Common mistakes to avoid:** Not testing all activation modes, missing control system faults, or failing to document test results with photographs
- **Best practices for efficient completion:** Maintain consistent testing schedules, keep detailed records of previous tests, and train multiple staff members
- **Pro tips for educational settings:** Coordinate tests during quiet periods, use testing as an opportunity to review barrier familiarity, and maintain clear test schedules for staff
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Slow deployment times, incomplete closure, or frequent control faults

Quick Reference Checklist

- Previous test results and system status reviewed
- Control systems and indicators checked
- System status verified before testing
- Functional tests conducted safely
- Barrier deployment and closure observed
- System reset to normal operation
- Test results documented with photos
- Evidence uploaded to Compliance Pod

Grouped Tasks

Grouping is feasible; align with related tasks of the same frequency and contractor visit.

Related Tasks

- Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Sprinkler Systems Functional Test
- Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Smoke Vents & AOVs Functionality Test

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