



29. Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Portable Fire Extinguishers Monthly Visual Check

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

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

Why This Task Matters

Your monthly visual checks of portable fire extinguishers ensure that first responders have immediate access to reliable firefighting tools. By maintaining properly positioned and intact extinguishers in high-risk educational areas, you support rapid response that can prevent small fires from escalating. Your systematic monitoring of these essential safety devices demonstrates your vital role in maintaining practical fire protection throughout the school.

Task Summary

Statutory: Monthly visual checks confirm extinguishers are correctly located, accessible, have intact pins and seals, and are free from damage or discharge. This routine inspection involves checking extinguisher positioning, verifying physical condition, inspecting safety seals, and ensuring clear access to equipment. In education, extinguishers often cover high-risk areas such as labs, kitchens, workshops, and IT suites where ignition sources are present. These simple monthly checks ensure readiness between annual services. The inspection includes documenting equipment condition, checking surrounding areas, and ensuring all access requirements are met. Evidence produced includes inspection log entries documenting all checks performed and observations, annotated photos showing extinguisher locations and condition, and any issues identified with immediate actions taken.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:** Requires portable fire extinguishers to be maintained in good working order
- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B (Buildings other than dwellinghouses):** Provides guidance on extinguisher inspection
- **British Standard BS 5306: Fire extinguishing installations and equipment on premises:** Specifies requirements for extinguisher inspection
- **British Standard BS 9999: Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings - Code of practice:** Includes guidance on routine inspection procedures
- **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014** (for independent schools): Requires adequate firefighting equipment

Typical Frequency

Portable fire extinguishers must be visually checked monthly, with these routine inspections continuing throughout the academic year. In educational settings, monthly checks are essential for maintaining firefighting readiness. The frequency cannot be reduced as it is a statutory requirement for ensuring firefighting equipment remains operational.

Applicability

This task applies to all educational establishments with portable fire extinguishers, which is common in virtually all schools and colleges. It is a core statutory task essential for providing first-line firefighting capability. The task applies to all premises with portable extinguishers, particularly in areas with fire risks.

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 extinguisher inspection. Staff should be familiar with extinguisher locations and normal appearance.
- **Permit to Work:** No permit to work is typically required for this inspection task.
- **Delivery Model:** Normally completed in-house by trained staff to ensure regular inspection and familiarity with the equipment.

Key Considerations

- **Timing considerations:** Schedule during term time to maintain continuous monitoring

- **Cost implications:** Minimal cost if completed in-house, though may require occasional staff training
- **Resource requirements:** Access to all extinguisher locations
- **Potential disruption:** Minimal disruption as this is primarily a visual inspection
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Inspection results should inform the fire risk assessment

Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure inspector is familiar with extinguisher locations and normal appearance
- Confirm access to all extinguisher locations
- Check that inspection can be conducted safely in building areas
- Ensure familiarity with emergency procedures if issues are found

Tools & Materials

- Extinguisher location records and inspection checklist
- Logbook for recording inspection results
- Camera for documenting extinguisher condition
- Pen for recording observations
- Basic tools for minor adjustments if needed

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Pre-Inspection Preparation

1. Review previous inspection results and any outstanding issues
2. Gather extinguisher location records and access information
3. Prepare inspection checklist and documentation forms
4. Confirm access to all extinguisher locations

Phase B: Visual Inspection

1. Check extinguisher positioning and mounting security
2. Inspect physical condition for damage or corrosion
3. Verify safety pins and tamper seals are intact
4. Examine pressure gauges for correct readings
5. Check surrounding areas for obstructions
6. Ensure clear access and visibility

Phase C: Equipment Verification

1. Confirm extinguishers are appropriate for location risks
2. Check identification labels and instructions
3. Verify extinguisher type and capacity markings
4. Inspect for signs of use or tampering
5. Check that wall brackets are secure

Phase D: Documentation

1. Record inspection date, time, and staff conducting inspection
2. Document condition of all extinguishers and components
3. Photograph extinguisher locations and any issues found
4. Note any damage repaired or issues identified
5. Sign and date the log entry

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- Extinguishers must be securely mounted and accessible
- Safety pins and seals must be intact
- Pressure gauges must show correct readings
- No visible damage or corrosion should be present

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 secure any damaged extinguishers and restrict use if necessary. Escalate issues to facilities management and arrange urgent replacement or repair. Implement alternative firefighting measures in affected areas.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

Secure any extinguishers moved during inspection. Ensure all equipment remains accessible after inspection.

Completion Checks

Verify that the log entry is complete with all required details. Confirm that photographic evidence shows extinguisher conditions. Ensure any issues are clearly documented for follow-up.

Record-Keeping & Evidence

- **Upload Process:** Upload any required statutory or supporting evidence to the

corresponding task form in Compliance Pod.

- **Statutory Evidence:** Inspection log entry and photos must be retained for at least 3 years.
- **Supporting/Good Practice Evidence:** Detailed inspection observations and photographic records support audit readiness.

Common Pitfalls & Best Practice Tips

- **Common mistakes to avoid:** Not checking all extinguishers, missing pressure gauge issues, or failing to document observations with photographs
- **Best practices for efficient completion:** Maintain consistent inspection schedules, keep detailed records of previous checks, and coordinate with building maintenance staff
- **Pro tips for educational settings:** Include extinguisher checks in routine building maintenance patrols, use inspection as an opportunity to review firefighting training, and maintain clear records of normal equipment conditions
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Missing safety pins, low pressure readings, or signs of tampering

Quick Reference Checklist

- Previous inspection results reviewed
- Extinguisher locations and access points identified
- Positioning and mounting security checked
- Physical condition and seals inspected
- Pressure gauges verified correct
- Surrounding areas confirmed clear
- Any damage repaired immediately
- Inspection 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 - Fire Suppression Systems Visual Check
- Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Fire Hydrants Visual Check
- Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Dry & Wet Risers Visual Check

- Fire - Extinguishing Equipment - Fire Hose Reels Visual Check

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Users must ensure that all tasks are carried out in line with current legislation, manufacturer instructions, site-specific risk assessments, and organisational policies. Where necessary, professional advice should be sought from competent and accredited specialists — for example, fire risk assessors, water hygiene consultants, electrical engineers, gas safety contractors, or health and safety advisors.