



32. Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Disabled Refuge Full Service & Inspection

Category:	Fire
Subcategory:	Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes
Frequency:	Yearly
Status:	Statutory
Type:	Approved Contractor
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 commitment to maintaining functional disabled refuge systems ensures that mobility-impaired pupils, staff, and visitors have safe locations to wait for assistance during emergencies. By ensuring these critical systems operate correctly in colleges and multi-storey schools, you support compliance with equality legislation and safeguard the most vulnerable members of the school community. Your expertise in overseeing these essential accessibility systems demonstrates your vital role in inclusive emergency preparedness.

Task Summary

Statutory: Annual servicing of disabled refuge systems, including intercoms, alarms, and signage, ensures they remain fully functional. This comprehensive maintenance involves testing communication systems, verifying alarm functionality, inspecting signage, and checking system integration. The service includes functional testing of intercoms, emergency lighting, call systems, and assistance coordination procedures. These systems provide a safe location for mobility-impaired pupils, staff, or visitors awaiting assisted evacuation. In colleges and multi-storey schools, this is essential to ensure compliance with equality legislation and safeguarding responsibilities. The inspection includes checking for damage, testing all components, and verifying emergency

procedures. Evidence produced includes the contractor's inspection report detailing all components tested and findings, system test certificate confirming functionality, and any recommendations for maintenance or upgrades.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:** Requires adequate arrangements for disabled persons during evacuation
- **Equality Act 2010:** Requires reasonable adjustments for disabled persons including emergency evacuation
- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B (Buildings other than dwellinghouses):** Provides guidance on disabled refuge systems
- **British Standard BS 9999: Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings - Code of practice:** Includes guidance on disabled refuge systems
- **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014** (for independent schools): Requires adequate provision for pupils with disabilities

Typical Frequency

Disabled refuge systems must be serviced and inspected annually where fitted, with this comprehensive maintenance typically scheduled during school holidays. In educational settings with refuge systems, annual servicing is essential for ensuring system reliability. The frequency cannot be reduced as it is a statutory requirement for maintaining accessibility during emergencies.

Applicability

This task applies to educational establishments with disabled refuge systems, which is occasional as these are typically found in multi-storey buildings or those serving disabled users. It is a core statutory task where refuge systems are present, essential for ensuring accessibility and equality compliance. The task applies to schools and colleges with refuge areas for disabled occupants.

Responsible Persons

- **Task Type:** Approved Contractor
- **Contractor Requirements:** This task should be carried out by a competent fire safety systems company with expertise in disabled refuge systems. Contractors should be familiar with accessibility requirements and communication systems. Typical cost range: £200-£400 per annual inspection depending on system complexity.
- **Permit to Work:** No permit to work is typically required, though coordination with building users may be needed.

- **Delivery Model:** Normally contractor-delivered due to the specialist testing equipment and technical knowledge required.

Key Considerations

- **Timing considerations:** Schedule during school holidays to allow for testing and any repairs
- **Cost implications:** Budget £200-£400 annually for professional servicing and inspection
- **Resource requirements:** Allow access to refuge areas and communication systems
- **Potential disruption:** May require temporary system isolation during testing
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Inspection findings should inform the fire risk assessment

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Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure the contractor has expertise in disabled refuge systems
- Provide access to refuge areas and system documentation
- Confirm testing can be conducted without endangering building occupants
- Arrange for safe testing conditions

Tools & Materials

- Refuge system documentation and location records
- Testing equipment for communication systems
- Documentation templates and checklists
- Safety equipment for working in refuge areas

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Pre-Service Assessment

1. Review refuge system documentation and previous inspection records
2. Identify all refuge areas and system components
3. Gather user requirements and emergency procedures
4. Prepare inspection schedule and safety procedures

Phase B: Visual Inspection

1. Inspect refuge area signage and identification
2. Check intercom systems and communication equipment
3. Examine alarm systems and emergency lighting
4. Verify call buttons and assistance request systems
5. Assess refuge area comfort and safety features

Phase C: Functional Testing

1. Test intercom communication with control room
2. Verify alarm activation and system status indicators
3. Check emergency lighting and power supplies
4. Test call button operation and response systems
5. Confirm integration with building fire alarm systems

Phase D: Maintenance and Servicing

1. Clean and maintain communication equipment
2. Replace faulty components and signage
3. Update contact information and procedures
4. Adjust system settings as required

Phase E: Documentation and Certification

1. Document all test results and system performance
2. Prepare detailed inspection report with findings
3. Issue test certificate confirming functionality
4. Recommend maintenance schedule and any upgrades

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- Intercom systems must provide clear two-way communication

- Emergency lighting must illuminate refuge areas adequately
- Call systems must activate alarms and indicate location
- All signage must be clear and accessible

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 implement alternative communication arrangements. Escalate significant issues to facilities management and arrange urgent repairs. Monitor refuge areas closely until systems are restored.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

Restore all systems to normal operation and remove any temporary barriers. Ensure refuge areas remain accessible.

Completion Checks

Verify that the inspection report covers all refuge areas. Confirm that the test certificate confirms system functionality. Ensure recommendations are specific and prioritised.

Client Oversight Checklist (Before the Visit)

- Confirm contractor's expertise in disabled refuge systems
- Provide system documentation and location details
- Arrange access to refuge areas
- Schedule during period when disruption is minimised

Client Oversight Checklist (During the Visit)

- Observe inspection of communication and alarm systems
- Ensure comprehensive testing of all refuge areas
- Verify that measurements are taken accurately
- Confirm detailed documentation of findings

Deliverables & Acceptance Criteria (After the Visit)

- Receive inspection report detailing all components tested
- Review test certificate confirming system functionality
- Ensure recommendations for maintenance are specific and prioritised
- Confirm that all documentation is complete and accurate

Defects & Follow-up

Follow instructions on the Compliance Pod task completion form to record remedial/follow up actions and generate Reactive Task Tickets as required. Prioritise repairs to critical communication systems. Agree timescales for component replacement. Schedule re-inspection after major works.

Reinstatement & Sign-off

Confirm systems are operational and refuge areas are accessible. Complete final sign-off once all documentation is received.

Record-Keeping & Evidence

- **Upload Process:** Upload any required statutory or supporting evidence to the corresponding task form in Compliance Pod.
- **Statutory Evidence:** Contractor's inspection report and test certificate must be retained for at least 3 years.
- **Supporting/Good Practice Evidence:** Component-by-component test results and maintenance recommendations support audit readiness.

Common Pitfalls & Best Practice Tips

- **Common mistakes to avoid:** Not testing all refuge areas, missing communication system faults, or failing to check integration with fire alarms
- **Best practices for efficient completion:** Maintain detailed refuge register, conduct pre-service visual checks, and coordinate with disability support staff
- **Pro tips for educational settings:** Use inspection visits to review refuge procedures with staff, coordinate with disability advisors, and maintain clear records of user requirements
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Poor intercom audio quality, faulty call buttons, or inadequate emergency lighting

Quick Reference Checklist

- Refuge system documentation and previous records reviewed
- All refuge areas identified and accessed
- Communication systems and alarms inspected
- Functional testing of intercoms and call buttons completed
- Emergency lighting and power supplies verified
- Maintenance and component replacement completed
- Inspection report and test certificate received

- Evidence uploaded to Compliance Pod

Grouped Tasks

This task is not normally grouped with other tasks.

Related Tasks

- Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Fire Doors Full Inspection
- Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Fire Dampers Full Service & Inspection
- Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Fire Doors Integrity & Gaps Check
- Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Means of Escape & Final Exit Doors Inspection

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