



35. Fire - Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes - Disabled Refuge Functionality Test

Category:	Fire
Subcategory:	Passive Fire Protection & Escape Routes
Frequency:	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 monthly functionality tests of disabled refuge systems ensure that these critical safety features remain reliable for mobility-impaired individuals. By conducting regular checks in colleges and multi-storey schools, you maintain confidence that refuge areas will function correctly during emergencies. Your systematic testing of these essential accessibility systems demonstrates your vital role in inclusive emergency preparedness.

Task Summary

Statutory: Monthly functionality tests confirm refuge communication systems, alarms, and indicators work correctly. This routine testing involves checking intercom operation, verifying alarm activation, testing indicator lights, and confirming system readiness. These checks ensure that refuge areas remain safe and usable for mobility-impaired occupants. For educational sites with changing cohorts, regular testing maintains assurance that provision remains accessible and reliable. The testing includes documenting system operation, checking for faults, and ensuring all components function correctly. Evidence produced includes logbook records documenting all tests performed and results, annotated photos showing system components and indicator status, and any issues identified with immediate actions taken.

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 functionally tested monthly where fitted, with these routine tests continuing throughout the academic year. In educational settings with refuge systems, monthly testing is essential for maintaining system reliability. The frequency cannot be reduced as it is a statutory requirement for ensuring 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:** Competent Person
- **In-House Requirements:** This task can be completed by trained facilities staff or fire safety officers who have received appropriate training in refuge system testing. Staff should be familiar with system operation and normal status indicators.
- **Permit to Work:** No permit to work is typically required for this testing task.
- **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 monitoring

- **Cost implications:** Minimal cost if completed in-house, though may require occasional staff training
- **Resource requirements:** Access to refuge areas and system components
- **Potential disruption:** May require brief system activation during testing
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Test results should inform the fire risk assessment

Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure tester is familiar with refuge system operation and testing procedures
- Confirm access to refuge areas and system components
- Check that testing can be conducted without endangering building occupants
- Inform relevant staff about potential system activation

Tools & Materials

- Refuge system documentation and test procedures
- Logbook for recording test results
- Camera for documenting system status
- Testing equipment for communication systems
- Personal protective equipment if required

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Pre-Test Preparation

1. Review refuge system documentation and previous test records
2. Gather testing checklist and documentation forms
3. Prepare communication testing equipment
4. Confirm access to all refuge areas

Phase B: Visual Inspection

1. Check refuge area signage and identification
2. Inspect intercom equipment and communication devices
3. Examine alarm indicators and status lights
4. Verify call buttons and assistance request systems
5. Assess overall system readiness

Phase C: Functional Testing

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

Phase D: Documentation

1. Record test date, time, and staff conducting test
2. Document system operation and response times
3. Photograph system components and indicators
4. Note any issues or unusual observations
5. Sign and date the logbook entry

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- Intercom systems must provide clear communication
- Alarm indicators must activate and show correct status
- Call buttons must function and trigger responses
- Emergency lighting must illuminate refuge areas

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 issues to facilities management and arrange urgent repairs. Monitor refuge areas closely until systems are restored.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

Reset all systems to normal operation. Ensure refuge areas remain accessible.

Completion Checks

Verify that the logbook entry is complete with all required details. Confirm that photographic evidence shows system status. 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:** Logbook records 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 refuge areas, missing communication faults, or failing to document observations 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:** Include refuge tests in routine building safety checks, use testing as an opportunity to review procedures with staff, and maintain clear records of system performance
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Poor intercom quality, non-functional call buttons, or faulty indicators

Quick Reference Checklist

- Refuge system documentation and previous records reviewed
- All refuge areas identified and accessed
- Communication systems and alarms tested
- Call buttons and indicators verified
- Functional testing completed
- 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 - 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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