

December 2020 Fire Door Bulletin

Fire Door Inspections – What You Need to Know



Though often overlooked, fire doors play an essential role in fire safety of every building and should be a significant part of any fire risk assessment especially in sites with a sleep-in provision.

While fire doors resist fire and toxic fumes to prevent their passage from room to room, they do a dual job of allowing people and fire services to pass through.

Fire doors ensure that escape routes remain open and safe for the maximum amount of time possible in a fire.

They protect property and save lives.

However, it does not take much to disrupt a fire door's ability to function.

Minor damage to an essential component caused by misuse, uncertified modifications, improper maintenance or simply being propped open by tenants can prevent a fire door from doing what it was intended to do.

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Support partner of Jactone for their LPS 1223 Kitchen Suppression system and LPS 1666 Electrical Enclosure suppression systems.
Veritas is proud to be working with certified contractors under the BM Trada Q-Mark fire door Maintenance & Installation scheme.
Steve Dilloway GFireE, the business owner, is a Graduate member of the Institution of Fire Engineers.
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A Growing Problem

It has long been recognised that a lack of fire door inspection and maintenance is a major safety issue across the UK.

But over the past year this problem has been on the rise.

According to one study, some 60% of local authorities stated that they had delayed fire door maintenance and inspection programmes in the first half of this year, with 53% citing the Coronavirus pandemic as the reason.

Nearly 10,000 properties have been affected by this trend.

What the law says

The legal duties in respect to fire doors vary slightly by territory in the UK, but the requirements for compliance are largely the same and anyone in charge of a premises – such as building owners, landlords, head teachers and estates managers – bears a legal duty of care.

Under Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005, this means they must have an understanding of fire safety and take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and ensure occupants can safely escape in the event of a fire.

A competent “responsible person” must be nominated whose duty it is to assist in these tasks.

The legislation highlights the need for the inspection and maintenance of fire doors, stating that the responsible person must ensure fire doors are “subject to a suitable system of maintenance and are maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair”.

Failing to comply could lead to a criminal prosecution.

What fire door inspections should cover.

Building Regulations go in hand with Fire Safety Order 2005 to outline specifically what fire door inspections must cover. This includes an examination of:

- Seals – to ensure they are complete and in place to specification
- Operation – to ensure the door is functioning as it should
- Ironmongery – to ensure that components such as hinges, door closers and any other aspects to the door are correct, in place and working as they were meant too
- Wear and tear – to ensure the door and it’s components have not become damaged in a way that would impede their functioning
- Any modifications – to ensure that nobody has altered the door, for instance, with unspecified parts

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It is important to remember that all fire doors are manufactured, specified, procured, installed, and inspected and maintained with the understanding that the door in combination with the specific set of components will perform as needed for the location that it is placed in.

Competent inspections ensure that errors have not occurred during this process, and the fire door is able to perform as expected.

How often inspections are needed

While Fire Safety Order 2005 tells us that fire doors should be inspected and maintained at least annually, it also recognises that this may not be enough. Inspection frequency should be increased based on need.

For instance, if a door is more likely to become damaged, such as from heavy traffic, or if it is more critical to the fire safety design of a building, the responsible person is expected to have the door inspected more often.

The person who conducts these inspections must have sufficient training and knowledge.

They must understand what to look for on a fire door, what tools are needed, and understand the pass/fail criteria for inspections and how to document evidence.

Post the publication of the Hackitt report the need for the use of support partners with validated third party certification (TPC) such as BM Trada and BWF are recognised as being suitable and qualified for this works, what the Hackitt report does reinforce is that ALL fire and life safety works should only be undertaken by those who are TPC such as BAFE/LPS 1014, BM Trada and NICEIC.

Your fire risk assessor likewise should be able to give guidance and direction on your fire door issues, type, rating and TPC and any competent FRA should make reference to whatever deficiencies are present and who to approach for repairs or replacement works.

Steve Dilloway Graduate of the Institute of Fire Engineers GiFireE/Member of the Institute of Fire Safety Manager MIFSM

www.veritasfiresupport.co.uk

Veritas Fire Support Services | t. 01502 797035 m. 07831222767 28 Keel Close, Carlton Colville, Suffolk, NR33 8GT

BAFE Certification number 33008-1 Registration code SUFF033

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