

Inspection, Maintenance & Recharging of Portable Fire Extinguishers

This bulletin combines and replaces Alberta Fire Code (AFC) STANDATA bulletins

- 97-FCB-002, "Inspection of Fire Extinguishers," and
- 97-FCB-005, "Inspection, Maintenance & Recharging of Fire Extinguishers."

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the intent of the AFC regarding the inspection, maintenance, recharging, and the attachment of inspection tags on portable fire extinguishers for use in Alberta.

DISCUSSION

All portable fire extinguishers are subject to inspection, maintenance and recharging as required by the AFC 2006, Division B, Article 6.2.1.1. that references NFPA 10, "Portable Fire Extinguishers."(2002 Edition)

Inspection. A "quick check" that a fire extinguisher is available and is in operating condition. It is intended to give reasonable assurance that the fire extinguisher is fully charged. This is done by verifying that it is in its designated place, that it has not been actuated or tampered with, and that there is no obvious physical damage or condition to prevent its operation.

Fire extinguishers shall be **inspected monthly**, or when it obvious that the extinguisher may be subjected to corrosive or damaging environments the frequency may be more often.

Inspections may be carried out by the owner or by an employee designated by the owner. If the owner is in any doubt about the condition of a fire extinguisher following inspection they should contact either a certified fire extinguisher servicing company, a fire inspector in their local community or any fire service advisor with Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Maintenance. A thorough examination of the fire extinguisher. It is intended to give maximum assurance that a fire extinguisher will operate effectively and safely. It includes a thorough examination for physical damage or condition to prevent its operation and any necessary repair or replacement. It will normally reveal if hydrostatic testing or internal maintenance is required.

All fire extinguishers shall be subjected to **maintenance not more than one year apart** or when an inspection indicates a fire extinguisher is in such condition that maintenance is necessary.

Only companies that have had their facilities certified by an approved fire testing agency and only a qualified person working for the certified fire extinguisher servicing company shall carry out the maintenance and recharging of fire extinguishers.

Recharging. The replacement of the extinguishing agent (also includes the expellant for certain types of extinguishers).

Hydrostatic Testing

Extinguishers that show any evidence of corrosion or mechanical injury shall be hydrostatically tested. Non-refillable disposable containers and pump tanks do not require hydrostatic tests.

Only servicing companies certified by Transport Canada or its appointee shall carry out hydrostatic testing of high-pressure portable extinguishers.

Certified Extinguisher Servicing Agencies & Extinguisher Tags

Some companies that are not certified to “maintain” portable fire extinguishers have been contracting a service with building owners/managers to conduct the required monthly “inspections” and this service includes checking fire extinguishers to determine if they require immediate, annual or six-year maintenance and/or hydrostatic testing.

Generally, companies providing this service are fire alarm and detection system or fixed fire extinguishing system maintenance companies. As “inspection” checks are done, the service tags or labels of a certified fire extinguisher servicing company are being replaced by tags or labels reflecting the inspection company's name and address. This practice is not acceptable. Building owners/managers have the incorrect impression that their extinguishers have been properly serviced by a certified fire extinguisher servicing company.

Only qualified staff of the certified fire extinguisher servicing company, can affix tags or labels to portable fire extinguishers. The tag or label shall conform to AFC, Division B, Sentence 6.1.1.5.(3) and clearly indicate the level of service performed by the certified fire extinguisher servicing company servicing the extinguisher. Removal, addition or alteration of an extinguisher tag by anyone else is a violation of the Alberta Fire Code and the Safety Codes Act.