EXTINGUISHERS — GUIDE

Fire extinguisher inspection rules for business owners

Separate monthly visual checks, annual maintenance and local licensing before you book service.

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Start with the rules for your workplace and your equipment. A service tag does not establish that every duty has been met.

US workplace baseline

OSHA 1910.157(e)(2) calls for monthly visual inspections. Paragraph (e)(3) calls for annual maintenance checks. Paragraph (e)(1) places responsibility on the employer. These statements come from the regulation reproduced by Cornell LII [source below]. Read the scope and exemptions in paragraphs (a) and (b), including workplaces with evacuation policies, before applying it.

Annual maintenance is different from a brief visual check. Do not assume that reading a pressure gauge replaces maintenance. OSHA (e)(3) also requires the annual maintenance date to be recorded. Retain that record for one year after the last entry or the life of the shell, whichever is less [Cornell LII].

Where NFPA 10 fits

The Mitti by SafetyCulture public summary of NFPA 10 describes monthly visual checks and annual maintenance [source below]. Use that as an introduction. Ask your fire authority which edition and amendments apply to your premises. Do not treat a web summary as the adopted code.

Canadian premises

CCOHS advises monthly visual checks and service at least annually, or when a monthly check shows service is needed [CCOHS]. Confirm provincial and local requirements rather than importing the US regulation into a Canadian inspection plan.

Before the visit

Prepare an asset list, the previous service report and a floor plan. Ask the contractor to state which work is included. Request a separate list of defects, repairs and next service dates. Keep the report where the person responsible for the building can find it.

Sources

- Cornell LII, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.157, fetched 2026-11-10.
- Mitti by SafetyCulture, A Safety Officer's Guide to Fire Extinguisher Inspection, fetched 2026-11-10. This is a public NFPA 10 summary, not the adopted standard.
- CCOHS, Fire Extinguishers: Portable, fetched 2026-11-10.

Checked 2026-11-10. Planning information only. Confirm the adopted code, equipment instructions and local requirements with your fire authority.

Frequently asked questions

Does an annual service replace monthly checks?

No. The cited US regulation and Canadian guidance distinguish monthly checks from annual service.