Fire Door Safety: Maintenance and Compliance Requirements Explained

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Fire doors are one of the few building elements that have to work perfectly on the single worst day of a building's life. They compartmentalise fire and smoke, protect escape routes, and buy occupants time to get out. Yet fire risk assessments routinely find fire doors propped open, missing seals, or fitted with the wrong hardware. Understanding the fire door maintenance requirements

that apply to your building, and acting on them, is not optional paperwork. It is one of the most important things a responsible person does.

How Fire Doors Actually Work

A fire door is not simply a heavier version of an ordinary door. It is a tested assembly: the door leaf, frame, hinges, seals, glazing and ironmongery all work together, and that assembly is only as good as its weakest component. Fire doors are designed to:

- Resist the passage of fire for a specified period, typically 30 minutes (FD30) or 60 minutes (FD60)
- Seal gaps using intumescent strips, which expand under heat, and limit smoke spread with smoke seals (brush or fin seals)
- Self-close reliably from any open position, so protection is maintained even if someone forgets to shut it
- Hold their shape and fit under fire conditions, without warping or dropping out of the frame

Replace one component with an unmatched part, such as the wrong hinges or a non-fire-rated handle, and the whole assembly's certification can be invalidated even though the door looks fine. This is why fire doors need specific, trained inspection rather than a general maintenance glance.

Who Is Responsible, and Under What Law

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a general duty on the responsible person, usually the employer, building owner or managing agent, to ensure fire safety measures, including fire doors, are maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. This applies in England and Wales to virtually all non-domestic premises and the common parts of residential buildings.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 clarified that the Order applies to the structure, external walls and flat entrance doors of multi-occupied residential buildings. Building on that, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 require responsible persons in multi-occupied residential buildings over 11 metres in height to carry out quarterly checks of fire doors in the common parts, and to use best endeavours to check flat entrance doors annually, including seeking access from residents where needed. For the tallest residential buildings, the Building Safety Act 2022 adds further obligations, and it is worth understanding the duties that apply if you oversee blocks of flats, as many of our clients in housing associations and almshouses now do.

Common Fire Door Defects We Find on Site

During fire risk assessments and dedicated fire door surveys, the same problems recur across almost every sector:

- Damaged, missing or painted-over intumescent strips and smoke seals
- Self-closing devices disconnected, over-tensioned, or simply not fitted

- Excessive or inconsistent gaps around the door leaf, generally anything over about 4mm at the head and sides needs investigating
- Doors wedged or hooked open without a compliant automatic release device linked to the fire alarm
- Split, delaminating or water-damaged door leaves and frames
- Only two hinges fitted where the door's certification requires three
- Non-fire-rated locks, letterboxes or vision panels fitted after installation
- Missing fire door signage, particularly on doors held open legitimately or leading to final exits

Most of these defects are the result of well-meaning but uninformed changes: a door propped for ventilation, a new lock fitted by a locksmith unaware of fire door rules, or decorators painting over an intumescent strip. None of this is usually deliberate, but it can still amount to a failure to maintain.

How Often Fire Doors Should Be Inspected

There is no single legal interval that applies to every building, but a sensible regime often looks like this:

- **Weekly**, a quick visual check by staff or a nominated fire warden: does the door close, is it damaged, is anything propping it open
- **Monthly**, a slightly more structured check, ideally using a simple checklist, by someone with basic fire door awareness
- **Quarterly**, for fire doors in the common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings over 11 metres, as required by the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- **Annually**, a full, competent inspection of every fire door, including flat entrance doors in relevant residential blocks, checking construction, certification, hardware and seals in detail

The right frequency ultimately depends on what your fire risk assessment says about the building, how heavily doors are used, and the consequences if one fails. A care home corridor door used dozens of times a day needs more frequent attention than a rarely used store cupboard.

What a Compliant Inspection Actually Looks Like

A genuine fire door check goes beyond opening and closing the door. A competent inspector will verify that the door closes fully into the frame from any open position without sticking on the floor covering, that all seals and strips are continuous and undamaged, that the self-closer returns the door smoothly without slamming or stalling, and that gaps are consistent around the full perimeter. They will also check that hinges are the correct type, properly fixed with no missing or loose screws, that the leaf shows no signs of warping, delamination or water damage, that any vision panel glazing is intact and correctly rated, and that certification labels or plugs (often on the top edge of the door) can still be identified where the door is third-party certificated.

Staff carrying out weekly or monthly checks do not need to be fire door engineers, but they do need

some instruction so they know what they are looking at. Our Fire Awareness training gives staff a grounding in fire safety responsibilities, but the annual inspection should be carried out by someone with specific fire door competence.

Record Keeping: What to Keep and Why

Inspections that are not recorded are, in practice, very hard to prove. A defensible record system includes a dated log of every check carried out, who carried it out, what was found, and what action was taken, together with evidence of any repairs or replacements, including invoices or certificates from the contractor who did the work. Where doors are third-party certificated, keep the certification documentation and, ideally, photographs of the certification plug or label for each door, since these can disappear during redecoration.

Records are best kept for the life of the building, not just the current year, since they demonstrate a pattern of ongoing maintenance if a fire ever occurs or an enforcing authority asks questions. For residential buildings covered by the 2022 Regulations, they are also your evidence that the checks the Regulations require were carried out.

Repair, Replace, or Get a Proper Survey

Minor defects such as a missing screw, a worn seal or a disconnected closer can usually be repaired quickly and cheaply. Replacement becomes necessary when the door cannot be brought back to its certified performance: structural damage to the leaf, a frame that no longer holds the door square, or a door where third-party certification can no longer be verified and the installation history is unknown. Replacing like-for-like with another certificated FD30 or FD60 set is usually the safest route, since mixing components from different manufacturers can itself invalidate certification.

For buildings with large numbers of doors, such as schools, care settings or blocks of flats, a one-off visual check rarely gives the full picture. A dedicated fire door survey assesses every door against its certification, records defects systematically, and gives you a prioritised, proportionate action plan rather than a vague list of concerns. This is particularly valuable ahead of a fire risk assessment or when preparing for scrutiny from a housing regulator, and it is something we carry out regularly for clients including care homes across the region.

Integral Safety, based in Coalville, carries out fire door surveys and fire risk assessments across Leicestershire and the wider East Midlands, including detailed fire door surveys in Leicester, and can also act as your ongoing competent person for fire safety matters. If you are unsure whether your current fire door arrangements would stand up to scrutiny, get in touch to discuss a survey or assessment.

Talk to Integral Safety Ltd

We are health and safety consultants based in Coalville, Leicestershire, working with businesses across the East Midlands. If anything in this guide applies to your workplace, we can help.

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This guide is general information about UK health and safety law and practice, correct as at 11 November 2026. It is not advice on your particular circumstances. The latest version is at https://integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/fire-door-safety-maintenance-and-compliance.