

Annual Inspections to be Required For Fire Rated Door Assemblies

The 2006 edition of the **NFPA 80: Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives** includes numerous changes and additions to the previous version, including a new requirement for the annual inspection of all fire rated door assemblies.

What is the NFPA 80: Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives?

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is an international organization of more than 75,000 individuals and more than 80 national trade and professional organizations. NFPA 80 is referenced as the de facto standard for the installation and maintenance of fire rated door assemblies by all of the model building codes, including the ICBO Uniform Building Code (UBC)-1997, the SBCCI, Standard Building Code (SBC)-1999, the BOCA, National Building Code (NBC)-1999, the ICC International building Code (IBC)-2006 and the NFPA 5000 Building Construction and Safety Code-2006.

What type of doors are covered under the new NFPA 80 standard?

The annual inspection requirement applies to all fire rate door assemblies, including swinging Doors with Builders, Hardware, overhead rolling fire doors, horizontal-sliding fire doors and fire rated doors.

How is this new requirement different from the previous NFPA 80 standard?

The previous standard required the “frequent” inspection of fire rated doors and their immediate repair, if needed under the old requirement, it was nearly impossible to quantify what “frequent” meant, plus the building’s owner was charged with performing these inspections. Most owners were not aware of their responsibility; they lack the training to know what to check for when inspecting these openings, or how to evaluate whether these systems were operating effectively.

When will the requirement for annual inspection take effect?

The 2007 edition of NFPA 80 does not become enforceable until it is referenced in the building codes, but most fire inspectors in S. Florida have already been notified and inspections will be forthcoming soon. Even though the new requirements of NFPA 80 are not yet enforceable, it is advised that all building owners get a jump start on the inspection requirements.

What will be inspected on fire rated openings?

The 2007 edition of NFPA 80 requires the visual inspection of baseline elements which are common to all Swinging Doors with Builders Hardware. Inspectors must verify that doors and hardware are in working order with no visible signs of damage. Doors and assemblies will be checked for missing or broken parts and for field modifications or auxiliary hardware which may interfere or prohibit operation. Inspectors must also verify that self-closing devices and latching hardware are operational and confirm the presence and integrity of gasketing and edge seals where required.

Who will conduct these annual inspections?

The requirement creates an inspection system similar to ones used for elevators, sprinkler systems and fire alarms. Under these systems, third-party inspectors provide a written report of their finding to the building's owner or property their findings to the building's owner or property manager to keep on file and make available for review by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

What are the qualifications for inspectors?

Although the NFPA 80 does not identify a specific group to perform these annual inspections, qualified individuals will need to have broad product application knowledge and understanding of fire rated doors assemblies. Such individuals most likely will have five years of industry experience. Fire Door Inspection Services of S. Florida will use inspectors certified by Intertek - Underwriters Laboratories (UL) which is the largest testing facility in the world.

What happens when fire door assembly fails inspection?

Under NFPA 80, repairs to fire rated door assemblies must be made by the property owner immediately upon learning the result of the inspection.

Do the Same requirements for annual inspections apply to large buildings and campus environments where fire rated door assemblies' number in the thousands?

Provisions for extended inspection cycles are contained in the standard, conditional upon the approval of the AHJ.