Mid-Year Fire Extinguisher Inspection & Evacuation Drill Review Game Plan



While required by Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), fire codes, and other laws, annual fire extinguisher inspections and evacuation drills don't guarantee that your workers and workplace will be prepared when and if a fire actually occurs. A lot can happen in one year:

- Facilities change.
- Equipment gets moved.
- New workers get hired.
- Emergency wardens and designated fire fighters leave the company.
- Emergency contacts change.
- Renovations alter evacuation routes.
- Fire extinguishers get used in minor incidents that never get reported.

That's why many OHS coordinators perform regular fire safety review every six months. Such review doesn't replace the annual inspection or required maintenance by qualified technicians. Instead, it verifies that the company's fire protection program continues to function as intended while uncovering the deficiencies that annual inspections may not catch. Here's a five-step Mid-Year Fire Readiness Review Game Plan. Go to the OHS Insider site for a Checklist you can use to carry out your own mid-year review.

Step 1. Review Fire Extinguishers

Start with a walkthrough of every work area to verify that each fire extinguisher:

- Remains in its designated location.
- Is visible and unobstructed.
- Has current inspection and maintenance tags.
- Shows no signs of damage, corrosion, leakage, or tampering.
- Has an intact safety pin and tamper seal.
- Indicates adequate pressure (if applicable).
- Is mounted properly.
- Has legible operating instructions.
- Remains appropriate for the hazards in the area.

Strategic Pointer: Also verify that changes in operations haven't created new fire risks requiring additional or different extinguisher types. **Example:** You may have to reassess fire extinguisher placement or classification in areas where lithium-ion battery charging stations or new electrical equipment has been installed in the past six months.

Step 2. Review the Evacuation Plan

Emergency response and evacuation plans become outdated surprisingly quickly. Confirm that:

- Evacuation maps reflect the current building layout.
- Exits remain accessible.
- Assembly points remain suitable.
- Emergency wardens are still employed and trained.
- Workers know alternate exit routes.
- Contractors understand emergency procedures.
- Emergency contact information remains current.
- Special arrangements are made for workers with

disabilities affecting their ability to evacuate.

Strategic Pointer: If the workplace has undergone renovations or operational changes since the last drill, update the emergency procedures accordingly.

Step 3. Evaluate Previous Fire Drills

Don’t simply record that a drill occurred. Review what happened during the drill. Questions to ask:

- Did everyone evacuate?
- Were exits used properly?
- Did workers hesitate or become confused?
- Were visitors accounted for?
- Were emergency wardens clearly identifiable?
- Did anyone attempt to retrieve personal belongings?
- How long did complete evacuation take?
- Were corrective actions from the previous drill completed?

Step 4. Confirm Worker Readiness

Even supervisors and experienced workers may forget emergency procedures. So, during mid-year review, ask them these questions:

- Where is your nearest extinguisher?
- Which exit would you use if your primary exit were blocked?
- Where is your assembly point?
- Who is your fire warden?
- What should you do if you discover a fire?

Step 5. Review Documentation

Before concluding mid-year review, ensure documentation is complete and that up-to-date records exist for:

- Annual fire extinguisher maintenance.
- Monthly visual inspections (where required by company procedures).
- Fire drills.
- Corrective actions.
- Worker training.
- Emergency plan revisions.
- Accommodations for workers with disabilities.
- Equipment servicing.