Fire Safety Regulations 2022 – and Fire Door Checks

In general, fire doors within a block of flats fall into four categories, namely:

- flat entrance doors: these are particularly important, because, in blocks of flats, most fires occur within the flats themselves, and the flat entrance door prevents the spread of fire and smoke into the common parts, thereby placing other residents at risk
- doors to stairways and lobbies (between corridors and stairways): these keep the stairways and lobbies free from fire and smoke, so that they can safely be used by residents and others who might need to leave the building during a fire, and to assist firefighters during firefighting operations
- doors that sub-divide corridors: these are to limit the spread of fire and smoke throughout, for example, a long corridor
- doors to plant rooms and cupboards (for example containing electrical distribution equipment) and to service risers (shafts which allow the vertical passage of cables, pipes)

Residents have an important role to play in ensuring that, if there is a fire in their flat, the flat entrance door is an effective barrier to the spread of fire and smoke into the common parts.

Handover documentation must ensure that residents are given information that:

- fire doors should be kept shut when not in use;
- residents or their guests should not tamper with self-closing devices;
- residents should report any fault or damage immediately to the Responsible Person.

The above information must be provided by the Responsible Person to any new resident as soon as reasonably practicable after the resident moves into their flat. The Responsible Person must also remind all residents about this information at periods not exceeding 12 months starting from when the regulations come into force.

If the top storey of the building is above 11m in height (typically, a building of more than four storeys) the Responsible Person must:

- use best endeavours to check all flat entrance fire doors at least every 12 months; and
- carry out checks of any fire doors in communal areas at least every 3 months.

For the purpose of the fire door checks required by the Fire Safety (England) Regulations, it can be assumed that the Responsible Person has evidence that the design, specification and installation of the door is adequate for its location.

Fire door checks should be simple and basic. You should not need to engage a specialist to carry these out. With appropriate instruction, caretakers, managing agents, housing officers and maintenance personnel should be able to do them (for example in the course of other routine checks and visits to the building) as the checks are only visual and do not involve, for example, use of tools.

The Responsible Person will need to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to address any issues identified. Where inspections identify the need for repair or replacement of any fire door (for example communal or flat entrance door), this work must be undertaken by a competent contractor in acordnace with the latest Fire Risk Assessment.

Flat entrance door checks (Sample inspection checklist overpage)

To check flat entrance doors, you will need access to each flat, so that the door can be checked on both sides.
Fire door checks, you should check that:

a. Confirm fire-resisting flat entrance door is not replaced with a non-fire-resisting door; this may be obvious by absence of smoke seals/ overhead closers/ lightweight door/ no certification sticker intact to head of door leaf… Where any doubt exists, the contractor will need to confirm that the new door is fire-resisting, has been installed by a competent person, and they will be required to provide the technical information relating to the door to the Responsible Person.

b. Letterboxes are firmly closed and not jammed open. Where letterbox are fitted to flat entrance doors the contractor will need to confirm that these are suitable for use in fire-resisting doors and has been fitted by a specialist, competent person.

c. There is no damage to, or defects in, the door, frame or the securing wall that might affect the ability to resist the spread of fire or smoke (for example a split in the wood of a timber fire door, damage to any glazing in the door, warping of the door that affects its fit in its frame, a hole where a lock has been removed). Doors should also be checked for any alterations that may affect their fire resisting qualities.

d. The condition of the fire-resisting glass and glazing system in the door panels, and any associated side or over panels forming part of the doorset, retains their ability to resist the spread of fire and smoke.

e. There are no obvious defects in the hinges (for example missing or loose screws), or any other element of the ironmongery (for example ventilation grilles).

f. Intumescent strips (which expand when exposed to fire and seal gaps around the door) and smoke seals (which look similar to draught seals), if present, are undamaged, make contact with the door edge or frame, and have not been painted over during decoration activities.

g. The gap between the door and the frame is not too large. The industry standard is that the gap size should never be more than 4mm, except at the bottom of the door, where the gap should be suitably sealed by drop seal to top of hardwood threshold plate.

h. There is an effective self-closing device on fire doors of flat entrances and fire doors within common parts. This is very important. A fire door that does not close fully into its frame will not adequately hold back fire and smoke. You should check that the door will close fully into its frame when opened to any angle and allowed to close under the action of the self-closing device. A simple way to check this is to:

- firstly, open the door fully, then let it go
- then open the door to around 15 degrees and let it go

In both cases, the door should fully close into the frame, overcoming the resistance of any latch or friction with the floor.

Doors to stairways and lobbies and doors within corridors

Checking these doors is similar to checking flat entrance doors, so you should check for:

- damage or defects that might affect the door's ability to resist the spread of fire or smoke
- any damage to intumescent strips or smoke seals
- large gaps
- the presence of an effective self-closing device

In some premises, corridor and lobby doors might be held open on magnetic door hold-open devices. For this to be the case, there would be a need for smoke detectors, activation of which would cause the door to close. Care should be taken when checking the self-closing device on these doors. Use the test button, where provided, to close the door, rather than pulling the door from its magnet.

Doors to plant rooms, service cupboards and risers

Checks are similar to those described for other doors. In particular, you should check for:

- damage or defects that might affect the door's ability to resist the spread of fire or smoke
- any damage to air transfer grilles that may be present in the door
- any damage to intumescent strips or smoke seals
- large gaps

In the case of these doors, they may be either self-closing or kept locked shut. If the doors are self-closing, they should be checked as described above

Caution should be exercised to ensure that entry into any of these areas can be carried out safely by those involved, taking into account any findings of the relevant health and safety risk assessment.

Fire doors checks are vital in making sure a block of flats is safe for residents. The checks are not a substitute for periodic assessment of fire doors by fire safety specialists (for example on a sampling basis during fire risk assessments).

However, the simple fire door checks described in this guide will enable you to discover, and put right, most of the rudimentary defects that prevent a fire door from doing its job.

Employer's Requirements

(Revision 18 – Issue October 2023)

Specification for all tenures

Appendix 09 to ER v.18 Section 1: Procedural Issues

Appendix: fire doors checklist

Location			Checks completed									Comments – Issues identified; actions taken etc
Floor	Door	Door type	Door, frame, and securing wall	Letterbox	Glazing	Hinges, locks and other ironmongery	Door gaps	Strips and seals	Self-closer	Alterations	Any other damage	

Address ……

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Name ……

Job Title ……

Signature ……

Date ……