

How to Buy Fire Extinguisher Servicing

It can be quite daunting for anyone with a business or organisation looking for the first time to get fire extinguishers maintained. To ensure compliance with Fire Regulations fire extinguishers need to be serviced at least once a year by a 'Competent Person' – that is a Technician with a BAFE recognised examination certificate either BAFE, FETA, British Fire Consortium or IFEDA and if over 3 years old then this should be supplemented with a Technicians Refresher Certificate from a recognised body. It is the duty of the occupier to inspect the fire equipment between services on at least a monthly basis.

This is all the technical stuff but for most people it goes beyond this to the personal level where you find people that are competent and that you like and trust to do the job properly. So sourcing the right service provider is important as this is usually a long term commitment.

Finding an Extinguisher Servicing Company

Prices will vary from company to company – obviously the larger ones with sales teams and large offices will have greater overheads and will be more expensive than a small operator working from home. Unless you need nationwide coverage than this may be the only difference between them, but to be sure ask to see the following documentation before awarding them the work;

- **QUALIFICATIONS** - the Technicians needs to have a BAFE recognised examination certificate either BAFE, FETA, British Fire Consortium or IFEDA and if over 3 years old then this should be supplemented with a Technicians Refresher Certificate from a recognised body.
- **TRADE ASSOCIATION** – you have some come back if the firm that you are dealing with are bone-fide members of a genuine fire trade association which in the UK will be the UK Fire Association, FIA, IFEDA or BFC. These can sometimes be falsely added to service paperwork or membership may have lapsed - so if you are in any doubt call the trade association for verification.
- **INSURANCE** - employers, public liability and efficacy (failure to perform) – is the level of cover realistic for the risks they pose to your business?
- **REFERENCES** – similar organisation to yourselves in terms of size and industry sector and follow them up!
- **ESTIMATE** – unlike electrical and plumbing contractors the extinguisher technician cannot be sure of what work is required until they attend site and it is rarely cost effective to survey a site up front. Extinguisher servicing companies therefore tend to quote for attending each site and then a unit price to service each extinguisher. Do at least get a quote for attendance and basic extinguisher servicing.

Do not be tempted to go just for the cheapest or for that matter the most expensive – up front price is not an accurate guide to what you will actually pay in the end. Look for signs of good service, attention to detail and reasonably priced for the time they are likely to be spent at site. An offer to service 100 extinguishers at 40p each might appear at first sight good value but do you really think that your servicing bill is only going to be £40 for up to two or more days work!

By using a UK Fire Association Member for extinguisher servicing you are assured of receiving quality service by a committed company who's first interest is looking after your best interests. Members work to a Code of Practice details of which can be found elsewhere on this website which sets out what you the customer can expect from using a UKFA Member.

If you need further information contact Alan Palmer Secretary at the UKFA on 01932 252306 or email admin@uk-fa.org.

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