

Fire Extinguisher Standards

Fire extinguishers generally fall into one of three British Standards. These are as follows:

BS EN3 – This standard was put into place across Europe to allow for a more universal design of extinguisher, produced under a common specification and derived from various standards across numerous countries. All fire extinguishers must be coloured red under this European standard.

BS 7863 – This standard was introduced in 1997 and allows up to 10% of the extinguisher to contain colour coded identification panels, which can be placed above or on the operating instructions. The BS 7863 standard also ensures that the instructions are clearly visible when the extinguisher is mounted.

BS5423 – This standard is no longer in force as of 1997. Extinguishers that have been manufactured under BS5423 were colour coded so that their contents could be easily identified. The colour coding was as follows:

Water-based extinguisher: red Foam-based extinguisher: cream Powder-based extinguisher: blue
Carbon dioxide-based extinguisher: black Halon-based extinguisher: green Some extinguishers manufactured under this standard were coloured in a natural metal finish, such as stainless steel. It is also not uncommon to come across BS5423 extinguishers that are entirely red.

Fire Extinguisher Maintenance

BS5306-3 – This is the British Standard to which all fire extinguishers must be maintained. The Regulatory Reform Order 2005 recommends the following maintenance guidelines be undertaken:

User - weekly

- Examine the extinguisher's safety pin or clip, as well as any pressure indicators. This will allow you to determine if the extinguisher has been used.
- Examine the external condition of the extinguisher, looking signs of corrosion, dents and any other damage that might make the extinguisher unsafe for use.

A fire safety expert should carry out the following:

- BS5306 compliant basic annual service.
- Five-yearly extended service.