

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Fire Hydrant Inspection and Test Frequency

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to obtain the fire hydrant inspection and test frequency requirements for his/her jurisdiction.

Look closely at the fire hydrant in the photograph. While it may seem “normal” at first glance, a closer examination shows that the hydrant has been knocked off of its base, and is inoperable. Since the hydrant appears “normal,” this condition may go unnoticed until the hydrant is needed in an emergency.

While there is no nationally mandated standard for the frequency of hydrant inspections and tests, fire service personnel may want to work with their local water purveyors to develop one. The American Water Works Association includes this statement in its AWWA Manual M17, *Installation, Field Testing and Maintenance of Fire Hydrants*, 3rd Edition, © 1999: “The Water utility, unless expressly relieved of its responsibility by the fire department in accordance with a written agreement, public ordinance or other ownership, should schedule regular and sufficiently frequent inspections of hydrants to assure they are in good working order.”

Here is a sample protocol:

Annual Fire Hydrant Testing and Maintenance

At least once a year the following actions shall be conducted and recorded:

- A. Observe the general conditions of the equipment—cracks in the barrel, worn threads, etc. Replace or repair as needed.
- B. Exercise the valves, lubricate the threads, confirm the street valve is open.
 - 1. Locate the street valve.
 - Close the valve.
 - Open the valve.
 - Paint the cover white if it is not white or needs freshening.
 - 2. With the caps on, open the hydrant stem valve(s).
 - Lubricate the stem valve with light white grease.
 - Close the hydrant stem valves.
 - 3. With the hydrant valve(s) closed, open the caps.
 - Verify presence of gaskets. If missing—replace. Lubricate the threads with light white grease.
 - 4. With the caps off, crack the hydrant stem valve(s) and flow some water to verify that the street valve is open and to clean out any debris in the hydrant. One valve must be fully opened and flowed for at least 1 minute. If the street valve is closed, water will come out of the hydrant initially, then stop. If the street valve is open, water will flow until the hydrant valve is closed.
 - 5. Replace the caps.

You should contact your jurisdiction’s water purveyors to determine their scheduled frequency of inspection, testing, and maintenance of these important fire protection tools.

