

Compliance Critical

By Luke Moore, Director of Life Safety Services- Fire Door Solutions

Missing or compromised fire door and frame labels are some of the first items Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ's) look for when auditing for compliance to life safety and building codes. Consequently, it behooves Facility Managers to insure all parts of their facility fire doors are labeled appropriately with the proper nomenclature, fire protection rating, and other required data.

Labeling Standards

The governing standard for fire door labeling can be found in the International Building Code Section 716, and in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 80 Standard. While these standards govern fire door labeling at the point of manufacturing, the re-labeling of fire doors if a label has been removed or compromised, demands the same assessment and concern for notification.

The NFPA standards requires the following:

“Labels shall be applied in a location that is readily visible and convenient for identification by the AHJ after installation of the assembly.”

The fire door label content is also specified by standards and shall include:

- ✓ **Name of the fire door manufacturer**
- ✓ **Name or trade mark of the third party inspection body**
- ✓ **Fire protection rating (in minutes)**
- ✓ **Maximum temperature end point (for some fire doors)**

Who Can Label?

An independent third party inspection body is required to carry out fire door re-rating and labeling in the field. Fire door manufacturers and commercial clients are not authorized as qualified independent third party inspection bodies.

Labeling Process

The process of third party fire door inspection begins with identifying the original fire door manufacturer and rating. There are numerous indications of the original manufacturer to the trained eye. These might include unique markings, hinges, colors, strike plates, etc. Other nearby and similar fire doors can also provide evidence of the original manufacturer and rating.

For fire door protection ratings, the type of door construction, material used, and sometimes the construction of the wall housing the opening are critical to the decision. Other door details including door hardware and glazing impact the fire door rating. A qualified third party inspection body will have access to the fire door manufacturer laboratory listings for reference.

In most cases, a fire door protection rating can be arrived at through this type of field analysis. In rare situations, a representative sample of door construction material will need to be laboratory tested to arrive at the appropriate fire door rating.

Modifications

Fire door modifications often render a fire door and/or frame unable to be labeled. These innocent, but important modifications can void the original fire rating listed for the door. Common fire door modifications can include oversized signage on door, post-installation holes in door material, installed door stops or kick plates, etc. Before you modify a fire door, check with your third party inspection body.

In addition to any fire door modifications, fire doors not in compliance with NFPA 80 standards cannot be labeled as they do not function as designed or intended. Door clearances, door seals, operating lock sets and latches, and door closers all need to be tested and verified by a third party inspection body in order for the fire door to be labeled properly and be judged compliant to standards.

The Key to Labeling Compliance

Fire door repairs on the heels of a third party inspection are the key to getting doors in compliance with standards as soon as possible. Fire doors are a critical part of any life safety plan, and are expensive when they must be replaced. With the right fire door repair team, the use of approved smoke seals, through-bolts, shims, and fire door caulk can be used to meet standards and avoid replacing expensive fire doors.

About the Author:

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