

Portable Extinguisher Cabinets: The Importance of Replacing Missing Covers and Panels

By Mark Conroy

Portable fire extinguisher cabinets are installed for many reasons, including preventing malicious use. Where cabinets are locked, they need to be provided with a means for emergency access. That typically means providing a cabinet that has a pull-front cover or a break-front panel with striker. As an extinguisher technician, your job is to maintain the original intent of the cabinet while assuring the extinguisher is easily accessible during an emergency. Knowing where the requirements are located in the code is essential to convince the property owner that the installation is code compliant. Here's what you need to know to ensure cabinets are secure and protecting their contents.

NFPA 10, *Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers*, allows fire extinguisher cabinets to be locked:

6.1.3.10.1 Cabinets housing fire extinguishers shall not be locked, except where fire extinguishers are subject to malicious use and cabinets include a means of emergency access.

Cabinets designed to be locked, while providing easy access to the extinguishers, come with pull-front covers or break-front panels. Cabinets should never be left without their covers or panels (that would defeat their intended purpose of guarding against malicious use). Ensuring that their covers and panels are in place, during monthly inspections and annual maintenance, also ensures the extinguishers remain protected against misuse, accidental removal, or impacts.

Cabinets complying with this requirement include Brooks' **Mark Series**, and **FireTech™** molded polymer cabinets, as well as **FireTech™**, **Classic**, **Economyline**, and **Decorline** metal cabinets. All of these cabinets are designed for compliance with NFPA 10 and can be locked but have a means of emergency access. If the cover or panel is missing, the extinguisher cannot be locked and secured and is subject to malicious use.

During an inspection or annual maintenance, these extinguisher cabinets need to be examined to ensure the covers and panels are provided and installed correctly. If the cabinet has a break-front panel, there must also be a striker bar or striker hammer, which allows emergency access to the extinguisher. Missing strikers must be replaced to allow for emergency access.

Replacement Covers

Clear Covers	Red Covers	Fit Cabinets
M1C6	M1CR6	M1
MJC6	MJCR6	M1J
M2C6	M2CR6	M2
M2JC6	M2JCR6	M2J

Break-Front Panels (clear and scored)

Break Panels	Fit Cabinets
SAC818	BE916, FT916, 818 Series
SAC924	BE926, FT926, 924 Series
SAC1028	BE936, FT936, 1028 Series
FT55	FT5PR, FT5PW
FT10	FT10PR, FT10PW
FT20	FT20PR, FT20PW

Break-Front Strikers

Strikers	Style
BR13	Bar
BGH6	Hammer
FT100R	Red Hammer
FT100W	White Hammer

Extinguisher cabinets need to be maintained in their original condition, with their covers or panels installed, to prevent unwanted removal or dislodgment of the extinguisher from the cabinet. Installing quality, matching replacement parts will help prevent malicious use of extinguishers while ensuring they remain readily available in the event of a fire emergency.

Mark Conroy is an engineer in our Boston, MA office and a principal member of the NFPA Technical Committee on Portable Fire Extinguishers.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the above Tech Series article are the author's only and provide limited information. Although the information is believed to be reliable, Brooks Equipment Company, LLC expressly disclaims any warranty with respect to the information and any liability for errors or omissions. The user of this article or the product(s) is responsible for verifying the information's accuracy from all available sources, including the product manufacturer. The authority having jurisdiction should be contacted for code interpretations.