

Are Your Fire Hoses Senior Citizens?

It's an old comedy standby: A fire is raging, and a comedic character is rushing to the rescue.

Our daring hero breathlessly arrives at the scene, frantically unfurls a fire hose, takes a stance, aims the hose, signals his assistant to throw the valve open, and...nothing. No water - or at least none coming out of the *end* of the hose. But when the would-be hero looks behind him, there's water everywhere, because the old fire hose is leaking like a sieve.

Yep, it's funny - when it's happening to Buster Keaton, or to the Three Stooges, or to Laurel and Hardy.

But when it's happening to *you* in *real life*? Not so much. Transfer that scenario from the silver screen to your place of business and it morphs from a comedy to a tragedy. And one that's laughably easy to prevent.

Fire Hoses Don't Live Forever

Every piece of equipment has a useful life; nothing lasts forever. And that certainly applies to the fire hoses that are stored away at your place of business right now.

According to the National Fire Prevention Association, fire hose should have a maximum service life of 10 years from the date of manufacture. And that assumes that the hose has been used and stored properly. So if *your* hoses are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced. That's an absolute.

And if your hoses are *less* than 10 years old? They should be tested regularly to assure that they are ready for service. The NFPA recommends that hoses be inspected and tested at least once per year following these guidelines:

- **Inspect visually** to assure that the hose shows no indications of mildew, rot, cuts or abrasions, or deterioration from contact with chemicals.
- **Inspect the interior** of the hose for indications of delamination of the multiple layers of construction.
- **Pressure test** to the service test pressure marked on the hose following these guidelines:
 - Test the hose in maximum lengths of 300 feet.
 - Make certain that the hose is laid out straight, without kinks or bends.
 - After testing, be sure to clean, drain and dry the hose before returning to storage.

Though there are different types of fire hoses, the same standards apply: Replace hose that's more than 10 years old, and annually make a visual inspection and perform a pressure test.

And If You're Not Sure?

Uncertain about the age of your fire hose? Not sure if it's physically in good shape? No need to suffer with uncertainty.

Peace-of-mind is relatively cheap - at least when it comes to fire hoses. Just decide which hose is best for your situation, and buy some new to replace the old. That way you'll be certain not to imitate our hapless hero firefighter in a comedic situation turned tragic.

Thankfully, fires are relatively rare.

But it's an unfortunate truth that many people depend upon that statistical rarity as a hedge against being properly prepared. And when these folks find that the statistical odds have not been kind to them - well, it's anything but a laughing matter.