

NFDI PRACTICAL GUIDE 1

Common Fire Door Failures and How to Spot Them



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Why Fire Door Failures Matter

Even a single defective fire door can compromise an entire building's fire strategy. Fire doors are designed to resist the spread of smoke and flame — but only when installed, maintained, and closed correctly. Regular visual checks, combined with formal inspections by certified professionals such as NFDI, are essential for compliance and life safety.

Common Fire Door Failures

Below are the most frequent issues found during NFDI inspections — all of which can render a fire door non-compliant.

Failure Type	Typical Signs	Impact / Action
Damaged Door Leaf or Frame	Cracks, holes, delamination, or splits in the door or frame.	Compromises fire resistance — door must be repaired or replaced.
Poor or Missing Intumescent Seals	Gaps in seals, paint covering seals, or missing segments.	Fails to expand during heat, allowing smoke or flames to spread. Replace immediately.
Incorrect or Damaged Glazing	Loose, cracked, or untested fire-rated glass; missing beading.	Breaks integrity of fire door — must be replaced with certified glass and glazing systems.
Gaps Too Large or Uneven	Door gaps exceeding 3 mm at sides or 10 mm at threshold.	Allows smoke to pass through. Adjust hinges, latches, or thresholds.
Faulty Closers	Door slams shut or doesn't close fully; closer oil leaks.	Door won't close securely — fit a compliant self-closing device.
Unapproved Hardware	Non-fire-rated hinges, locks, or letter plates.	Invalidates certification — replace with fire-rated hardware to BS EN 1634.
Obstructions or Wedging Open	Door held open with a wedge, extinguisher, or furniture.	Illegal under fire safety law — remove obstruction and report repeated misuse.

How to Spot Failures Early

Routine visual checks can prevent small issues from becoming major compliance failures. Responsible Persons should look for:

- Doors not closing fully against the frame.
- Gaps wider than a £1 coin between leaf and frame.
- Damaged or missing seals or smoke brushes.
- Cracked or unlabelled glazing.
- Loose or missing screws on hinges or closers.
- Painted-over or missing fire certification labels.

NFDI recommends monthly in-house visual checks supported by annual professional inspections to meet regulatory expectations.

Why Use NFDI

Only qualified fire door inspectors can confirm compliance to UK standards and legal frameworks. NFDI's inspection process includes comprehensive photographic evidence, severity grading, remedial advice, and reinspection verification — all designed to support the Golden Thread of the Building Safety Act.

Nationwide Fire Door Inspections (NFDI)

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