



vantify
CONSULTANCY

Fire Door Appraisal

RESOURCE BROCHURE



Introduction

Fire safety legislation requires that the adequacy of fire precautions in existing buildings is determined by a fire risk assessment (FRA), not necessarily by an audit / survey of compliance against prescriptive guidance that applies to, for example, newly constructed buildings. The judgement as to the adequacy of fire doors in existing buildings often fits into this scenario.

There is a significant financial benefit in adopting a risk-based as opposed to a prescriptive audit approach, as this can avoid spending unnecessarily on replacing fire doors which may have 'failed' the audit approach.

We have therefore developed our Fire Door Appraisal service to assist clients in managing an existing building's stock of fire doors through a risk-based approach, enabling pragmatic decisions as to their adequacy to be made, which in turn, would support ongoing inspection and maintenance programs.

Prescriptive fire door inspection (audit) v fire door appraisal (risk assessment)

Fire doors are a critical component of passive fire protection in buildings, ensuring compartmentation that slows the spread of fire and smoke, ultimately saving lives and reducing property damage. However, there is often confusion between two distinct approaches to fire door compliance:

- Prescriptive Fire Door Inspection
- Fire Door Appraisal

We have outlined the two approaches below in order to highlight why selecting the right one matters:

Prescriptive fire door inspection

A prescriptive fire door inspection is a systematic and structured audit conducted against predefined regulatory and manufacturer standards. These inspections follow strict compliance criteria based on British Standards, Approved Document B, and guidelines such as BS 8214 and BS 9999 / BS 9991.

Whilst the inspection covers all the key fire door elements, results are often conveyed in terms of pass / fail, which could lead to decisions around replacing fire doors being made unnecessarily. Furthermore, decisions may be made in isolation and do not consider the unique fire risk profile of the building or its occupants, which could mitigate minor 'failure' elements.

Fire door appraisal

Instead of focusing purely on prescriptive criteria, this approach evaluates how a fire door is likely to perform in a building. The appraisal considers factors such as:

- the fire strategy of the building
- the number and mobility of occupants within the property being appraised, (e.g., hospitals v office buildings)
- escape routes and alternative means of egress
- the likelihood and potential severity of fire exposure
- fire detection and sprinkler or suppression systems present in the building.

In considering these factors, our assessors appreciate that a door may not meet every prescriptive checklist item but could still provide sufficient fire protection. Furthermore, rather than a blanket pass / fail, appraisals will assess the urgency of any required improvements, helping prioritise remedial work, based on risk rather than rigid compliance. This approach is particularly useful for older buildings, where strict prescriptive compliance may not be practical without disproportionate interventions.

Fire door appraisal methodology

The Fire Door Appraisal is a non-intrusive visual risk assessment of individual in situ fire doors, conducted typically on a 25% sample. The sample based approach is used in order to illustrate a range of fire door conditions within a building, to enable clients to benchmark the remaining doors in order to support wider decisions on their suitability and adequacy.

No destructive testing or dismantling of fire doors, frames, or associated components will be undertaken and it is worth noting that the appraisal is not a certificate, but an expert risk based opinion.

Why does this matter

- **Compliance v safety:** following strict prescriptive standards may ensure legal compliance, but does not always guarantee the most effective fire safety solution. A risk-based approach includes contextual analysis.
- **Cost-effective decision making:** buildings with existing fire doors may struggle to meet modern standards, potentially leading to costly replacements. A risk-based appraisal can help determine whether alternative mitigation measures are suitable.
- **Tailored fire safety strategies:** not all buildings require the same level of fire door performance. A care home with vulnerable occupants may need a more stringent approach than an office with minimal personnel.
- **Practicality in existing buildings:** many older buildings were constructed before current regulations existed. A risk-based approach allows for practical fire safety management without unnecessary overhauls.

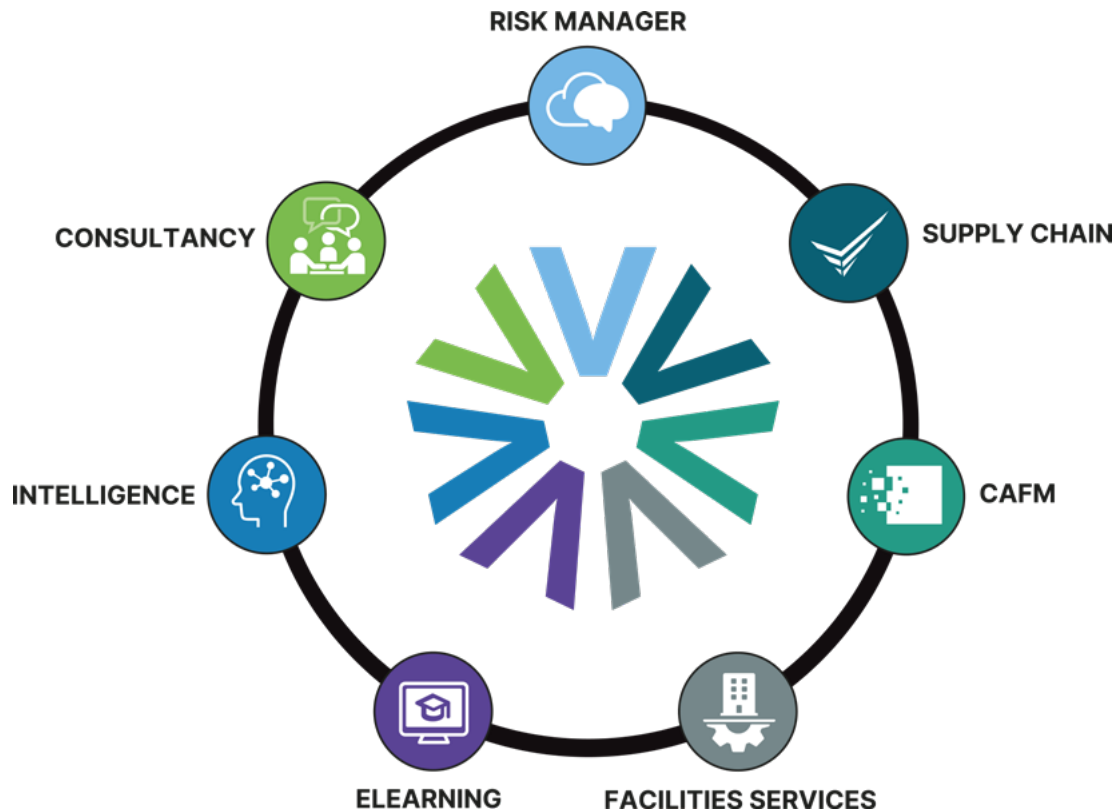
In Conclusion

Both risk-based Fire Door Appraisals and Prescriptive Fire Door Inspections are crucial tools in fire safety management. However, the choice between them depends on the building's needs, the risk profile and regulatory obligations.

A risk-based approach offers several advantages over prescribed audit based inspections:

- **Prioritisation of resources:** focuses inspection efforts on areas with the highest risk e.g. high occupancy levels, escape routes or areas with vulnerable occupants.
- **Enhanced safety outcomes:** identifies and mitigates the most serious threats first, reducing the likelihood of fire spread or failure of escape routes.
- **Data driven decision making:** uses data e.g. past failures, user frequency, environmental conditions to inform inspection frequency.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** can adapt to changes in building use, occupancy or fire risk.
- **Cost effectiveness:** reducing unnecessary fire door replacement.

The Vantify Ecosystem



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William Martin, Meridian, Prosure360, and Elogs have joined forces to create Vantify® - our unified ecosystem that provides a single vantage point for compliance and risk management.