

The bottom line for rolling steel fire door technicians

Editor's note:

In this installment of the Tech Corner, DASMA Technical Director Dave Monsour provides an overview of recent changes in NFPA 80 related to rolling steel fire door testing and technicians.

DASMA has published a number of short news items related to recently-implemented NFPA 80 requirements for rolling steel fire door testing and technicians. D+AS magazine mentioned it in a spring 2022 article on fire doors and in a summer 2024 NewsLine. Additionally, several DASMA Technical Data Sheets (including 271, 295, and 299) have been updated to reflect these changes. However, the process to implement these requirements into NFPA 80 has been somewhat of a bumpy road and as a result, the final answer was not known until December 2024. The following Q&A lays out the final answer and attempts to shed some light on the process involved in obtaining it:

Q: Does NFPA 80 include requirements on who is permitted to work on rolling steel fire doors?

Yes and no. "Yes" with respect to the work known as "periodic inspection and drop testing," and "no" with respect to the work known as "initial installation and acceptance testing."

Q: What is "acceptance testing"?

Acceptance testing is the drop testing done after initial installation to demonstrate that the door drops and descends to the fully closed position in a proper manner and can be successfully reset for future drops. It should be done in the presence of a code official or other Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ).

Q: Is anyone permitted to conduct initial installation and acceptance testing?

NFPA 80 is silent on this issue. Implicitly, the NFPA Technical Committee (TC) trusts rolling steel fire door manufacturers to regulate who installs their products. Manufacturers choose to sell — or not to sell — their products to whomever they wish, thereby retaining visibility over the dealers responsible for the installation and acceptance testing. This approach is important to the rolling door industry; neither dealers nor manufacturers want NFPA 80 to regulate who can perform initial installation and acceptance testing.

Q: What is "periodic inspection and drop testing"?

"Periodic inspection and drop testing" refers to the annual (at least) post-installation visit of a trained technician to the jobsite for the purpose of a thorough inspection of the door, which includes a drop test.

Q: Why does the rolling door industry, and NFPA 80, want to regulate who can conduct periodic inspection and drop testing?

Because once the door is installed, the manufacturer and the dealer often lose visibility over its maintenance. Owners and end users of fire doors have been free to employ untrained and unqualified persons to inspect, test, and maintain the doors — a situation that is of great concern to the industry.

Q: What are the NFPA 80 requirements on who is permitted to do periodic inspection and drop testing?

The requirements exist in both the 2022 and 2025 Editions of NFPA 80. DASMA and IDA worked together to sponsor the changes, which received overwhelming support from the NFPA 80 Technical Committee. A definition has been added to the standard that reads as follows:



DAVE MONSOUR

***Trained Rolling Steel Fire Door Systems Technician** — A technician with documented training and who is qualified through experience with the inspection, testing, and maintenance of rolling steel fire doors.*

Chapter 5 of NFPA 80, "Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance," includes the following statement:

For [rolling steel doors and service counter fire doors], periodic inspection and testing shall be performed by a trained rolling steel fire door systems technician.

NFPA 80 Appendix A includes a helpful and detailed explanation of the reasons for this requirement, what it means for businesses, and how AHJs should interpret it. The bottom line is that a rolling steel fire door systems technician should be trained by a reputable source and be able to produce documentation verifying the training when requested by an AHJ.

Q: What is the practical impact of these requirements?

The new requirements represent a successful resolution to a longstanding industry effort to place some "teeth" in the NFPA provisions over who can inspect and test rolling steel fire doors. The new editions of NFPA 80 will raise the level of the whole industry and provide for much better performance of rolling steel fire doors throughout their lifespan.

Q: What was the "bumpy road" to establish this requirement, and why does it matter?

Although the provisions were uncontroversial when first adopted in 2022, some NFPA 80 TC members objected to it after the fact in 2023, which caused some confusion and eventually led to some modifications in the language. This may matter to door dealers and other professionals in the industry because, unfortunately, the above definition was omitted from the first print edition of the 2025 standard. However, it is included in the online version and all subsequent printings.

Q: How can a technician receive the mandatory training?

DASMA recommends training through IDEA, the Institute for Door Dealer Education and Accreditation: <https://www.dooreducation.com/certification>. IDEA's educational programs were developed by collaboration between IDA and DASMA, and DASMA members have volunteered hundreds of hours in conducting the training. Additionally, virtually every rolling steel fire door manufacturer offers technician training. Another valuable resource is Mount Onsite Training: <https://mountonsitetraining.com>. ■

Contact us

If you have questions about this topic or suggestions for future content, please email Dave Monsour at dasma@dasma.com.