What documentation does CMS expect for preventive maintenance?

THE DIRECT ANSWER

CMS expects complete, dated records proving every required inspection, test, and maintenance activity actually happened at the required frequency — for fire protection systems, emergency power, medical equipment, and building systems. The maintenance itself can follow manufacturer recommendations or a risk-based Alternative Equipment Maintenance (AEM) program, but the documentation is non-negotiable: CMS's most common life safety citations are missed tests and missing logs, not broken equipment.

THE CORE DOCUMENT SET

- Fire alarm and detection — testing per NFPA 72 frequencies, with records of each test
- Sprinkler and standpipe systems — inspection, testing, and maintenance per NFPA 25, documented
- Fire extinguishers — monthly inspections and annual maintenance, tagged and logged
- Emergency generators — weekly inspections and monthly 30-minute load tests (K-tag data shows this is one of the most cited items nationally), plus annual full-load tests
- Medical gas and vacuum systems — inspection, testing, and maintenance records
- Medical equipment — maintenance per manufacturer recommendations or the facility's AEM program, with completion records
- Fire and smoke doors, dampers — inspection records per NFPA 80/105 frequencies

MANUFACTURER RECOMMENDATIONS VS. AEM

- CMS allows two paths: maintain equipment per manufacturer recommendations , or operate a documented Alternative Equipment Maintenance (AEM) program that sets risk-based frequencies. AEM isn't "maintain less" — it's a formal program with risk assessments justifying each frequency.

FIELD QUESTION

What is a CMS AEM program?

An Alternative Equipment Maintenance program — a documented, risk-based alternative to manufacturer-recommended maintenance frequencies, with risk assessments justifying each interval.

From Healthcare Facility Hub - free, like everything on the site. The full article is at the link below.

Caution: codes, editions, and targets vary by facility and authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). Figures marked as common practice are facility targets, not code requirements. Confirm against your AHJ and the current code text before acting.