



Key Boxes for Emergency Access

Seconds count in a life-threatening medical emergency or a fire. Yet many times, Fire Fighters responding to an emergency find access blocked by locked entrance doors or gates. To help reduce delays in providing emergency assistance, the Tacoma Fire Department has adopted use of the *Knox Rapid Entry System*.

Knox Rapid Entry System

Used by Fire Departments throughout the country, the primary component of the Knox Rapid Entry System is a key box unique to the jurisdiction in which it is located. Only the Tacoma Fire Department will have access to boxes used in this city. Use of the system may improve emergency service to building owners and occupants, and can result in savings by eliminating property damage from Fire Department forced entry.

Chapter 5, of the International Fire Code, authorizes the use of the Knox Rapid Entry System. The Code specifies that the Fire Department may require a key box containing access keys be installed at the entrance to structures or areas where access for the purpose of life safety or fire fighting is restricted. The Code authorizes the Fire Department to determine the type of key box that is approved for use.

Examples of structures or areas in which a key box is required include gates to large multi-family residential complexes with access roadways; locked outside entrances to stairways with enclosed standpipes; hazardous materials occupancies; building alarm system equipment locations; and occupancies where a large number of alarms occur, either for medical aid or fire, and entry is delayed.

How Does It Work?

A building owner installs or arranges for installation of a Knox key box on the exterior of the building at the main entrance point. The box will be equipped with a lock that can be opened only with a key that is issued solely to the Tacoma Fire Department. Emergency vehicles, such as medical aid units and fire trucks, are equipped with one key that is held in a special security device.

At the time the Knox box is installed, the building owner arranges for the Fire Department to visit their facility, inspect the access keys that will be placed inside the Knox box, and then lock the access keys inside the Knox box using the special security key. The building owner is not able to obtain a key to open the Knox box. If keys must be added or removed, arrangements must be made for the Tacoma Fire Department to visit the facility to open the box, inspect the change of keys, and then lock the box.

When emergency access is required, the arriving Fire Department member in charge removes the key from the special security device in their Fire Department vehicle and opens the Knox box to remove the access keys. After use, the Fire Department member places the access keys in the key box, and returns the special Knox box key to the security device inside the emergency vehicle.

Cost

Visit www.knoxbox.com for pricing information.

Obtaining and Installing the Knox Rapid Entry System

When an occupancy chooses or is directed to install a key box, it is purchased from a locksmith or lock vendor.

The building owner is responsible for installation of the Knox key box. It must be mounted on the building exterior at a height of between four to six feet and within three feet of the Fire Department direct access point (front door, main gate). Flush mounted or surface recessed Knox key box installations will be permitted, provided that the Knox box is clearly marked. Various sizes of the Knox box are available depending on the number of keys that need to be contained in the box.

Keys to be placed in the box include; main entrance door, fire alarm control panel, manual pull stations, fire sprinkler control padlock/s, elevator control, attic or roof access and any other keys necessary to access building controls.

Once the Knox key box is installed, the building owner contacts the Tacoma Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau during regular office hours at 591.5740 to finalize the installation. The Fire Prevention Division will arrange for the building owner to be contacted and visited by members of the local fire station to inspect the Knox box and install the access keys.

Other Knox Box Applications

High-Rise Buildings

A Knox box may be installed in the fire control room of a high-rise building for the storage of pass keys to various areas of that building. The Knox box must be readily identifiable and located in a conspicuous area of the fire control room.

Hazardous Materials Permit Information

A Knox document storage box may be required at selected facilities that would present a significant life safety hazard in the event of an emergency. Those buildings, which require installation of a document storage box, shall install the box adjacent to or in close proximity (within 2 feet) to the Knox key box.

Emergency responders can open electrically operated doors and gates by using Knox Key Switch devices.

When is a Key Box Required?

Fire Department inspectors will determine if a Knox key box is required at a structure or area as part of their annual inspection program. If a box is required, the responsible party will be notified in writing of the need to obtain a Knox key box.

Status of Non-Knox Rapid Entry System Key Boxes

In instances where an occupancy has been required to provide a key box under an earlier edition of the Fire Code, and the box in place is not a Knox box, the responsible party will be notified in writing to replace the box with a Knox key box. Responsible persons will be notified following the regular annual inspection of their occupancy.

If a building owner has voluntarily provided a key box where one is not required, and the box is not a Knox key box, the owner will be asked if he/she still desires the Fire Department to have key access to the occupancy. If the answer is yes, the owner will be directed to replace the existing key box with a Knox key box. The Fire Department will no longer use any access key box other than the Knox Rapid Entry System.

Elevator Key Boxes

The Tacoma Building Code requires that a key box be installed near elevators to hold

keys necessary for access to elevator machinery and controls. For elevators with Phase I recall, the key box must be located on the designated recall floor, above the recall switch. When no recall feature exists, the elevator key box should be located above the elevator call button, approximately 6 feet above the floor level.

The elevator key box may contain keys for the machine room door, secondary level door, pit door, roof door, fire emergency service, hoist way access, mechanical hoist way access devices and miscellaneous switch keys.

An elevator key box can be obtained from most locksmiths.

The owner shall provide a commercial 3200 Series Knox-Box, a 4100 Series Knox-Vault, or 4400 Series Knox-Vault depending on the total number of keys that must be stored (see www.knoxbox.com for details). The owner is responsible to provide a rapid entry key box that can easily store all the necessary keys. There are optional tamper switches that can be added to provide additional security.

For Your Information

Employees of the Tacoma Fire Department may not be involved with the sale, promotion or installation of the Knox Rapid Entry System or any Knox Company Product.

Questions

If you have questions about requirements for the Knox Rapid Entry System, or need to schedule an appointment to finalize installation of your Knox key box, call the Tacoma Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau at 253.591.5740 during regular business hours.

Vendors

Contact your preferred lock vendor to see if they can provide the Knox Rapid Entry System for you, or contact the Knox Company for a referral.

The Knox Company

1601 W. Deer Valley Road
Phoenix, AZ 85027
Phone (800) 552-5669
Fax (623) 687-2290
www.knoxbox.com