

Knox Box

A **Knox Box** is a small, wall-mounted safe that holds building keys for fire departments, emergency medical services, and sometimes police to retrieve in emergency situations.^{[1][2]} Local fire departments can hold master keys to all boxes in their response area, so that they can quickly enter a building without having to force entry or find individual keys held in deposit at the station.^{[3][4]} Sometimes the Knox Master Key is stored in a key retention device such as Sentralok or KeySecure. Knox Master Key retention devices provide accountability on access to the key. KeySecure records an audit trail of when the key is accessed while Sentralok requires a dispatcher to release the key with DTMF tones.



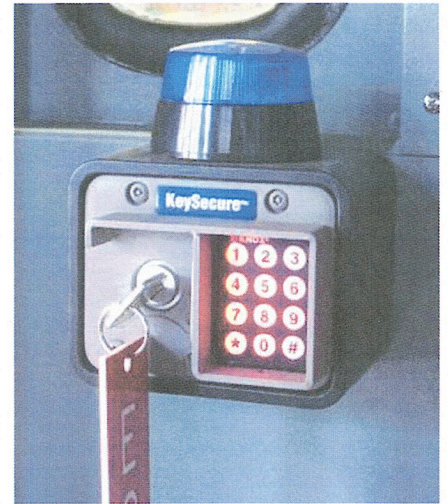
A Knox-Vault in an academic building.

A KnoxBox can also cut fire losses for building owners since firefighters can enter buildings without breaking doors or windows. It can also reduce the potential of a firefighter being injured forcing entry.

The disadvantage of the system is that it provides a single point of failure for security. If the key to a district's KnoxBox is stolen or copied, a thief can enter any building that has a KnoxBox. All

Knox commercial boxes have a standard tamper switch which can be wired to the building's fire alarm control panel to sound a supervisory alert if the box is opened.

The keys for Knox KeySecure are the same throughout a district (the extent of which depends on the district). At the February 2013 RSA Conference, a researcher publicized a possible exploit, claiming that he had successfully ordered a box, disassembled it, and used the information from disassembling the lock cylinder to create his own master key.^[5]



A Knox KeySecure, attached inside the cab of a fire engine, holds a high-security key to open KnoxBox key boxes in the area

References

1. "Fire Department Key Box Installation (Knox Box) - Steps to Get Yours" (<https://www.ssvfd.org/safety/knox-box/>). *Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department*. Retrieved 2020-02-07.
2. "Knox Box" (http://www.cudahy-wi.gov/departments/fire/knox_box.php). *www.cudahy-wi.gov*. Retrieved 2020-02-07.
3. "Knox Boxes to the Rescue: In Case of Emergency, Do Not Break Glass" (<https://99percentinvisible.org/article/knox-box-ubiquitous-key-boxes-for-firefighters/>). *99% Invisible*. Retrieved 2020-02-07.
4. "The Knox Box Requirements | Atlanta, GA" (<https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/fire/community-risk-reduction/the-knox-box>). *www.atlantaga.gov*. Retrieved 2020-02-07.
5. "Security expert warns fire department lockboxes can be hacked" (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-security-lockbox-idUSBRE92004T20130301>). *Reuters*. 2013-03-01. Retrieved 2020-02-07.