

 THE CITY OF COLUMBUS DIVISION OF FIRE FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU	Code Compliance Guideline	
	Rapid Key Entry Program	
	Fire Prevention Bureau 3639 Parsons Ave Columbus, Ohio 43207 (614)645-7641 Ext. 75682 www.columbus.gov	Issued: 08/10/2020 Revised: 06/10/2026 Permit Not Required

In an effort to provide both fire department emergency access and building security, the Columbus Division of Fire has selected the Knox Box Public Safety Key Box System to accomplish these goals. This is a system that will allow the Division of Fire access to a key for non-destructive entry into a building.

This is a system for commercial establishments within the City of Columbus, as well as all commercial and residential gates. In this program, the building owner / occupant orders the correct device(s) to install on the building to secure keys for use by the fire department in an emergency.

The Knox Rapid Entry System is a secure emergency access program developed for property owners and fire departments. When a fire breaks out, or there is any emergency, the Knox Box Rapid Entry System allows firefighters and paramedics immediate entry into buildings and property without forced entry damage or delay. Property owners store keys or access cards in high security boxes mounted near building entrances. Each device purchased by a property owner is keyed to a master key controlled by the Division of Fire.

In addition to key boxes and vaults; padlocks operate with the same master key. This allows fire department access to gated communities, storage areas, and elevators.

1.0 Buildings - Rapid Entry Access Box:

When an occupancy chooses to install a key box, a model 1600, 3200 or 4400 series box may be purchased from the Knox Company. A 1600 series box may only be used for outside riser room access. Where installation allows, a recessed box is recommended.

The purchaser installs the empty box according to the included installation guidelines. Once the Knox key box or device is installed, the building owner should contact the Columbus Division of Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786 to schedule an inspection of the installation for compliance and to have the building keys placed inside the rapid entry access box. **NEVER PLACE YOUR KEYS IN AN UNLOCKED KNOX BOX.** Future access to add or remove a key from the box should be coordinated by calling (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786. As an additional security precaution for **residential** buildings, a key to the apartment(s) is not required. (See 1.2 below for keys required for the Knox Box.)

- The owner / occupant is responsible for ordering and installing the key Box from Knox directly. This is done online at www.knoxbox.com

- A 3200 or 4400 series key box may be ordered with a tamper switch. It is not required.
- After the box is installed, the owner / occupant will need to call the Fire Prevention Bureau to schedule the locking of the keys inside the key box. (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786
- The owner /occupant is required to notifying the Division of Fire whenever a situation dictates the need to update the key box contents.
- Additional box(s) can be established as needed for a structure to comply with the requirements within or upon the owner/occupants desire.

1.1 Location of Rapid Entry Access Box:

The key box shall be installed in a location within five (5) feet of the main entrance of the structure, at a height of approximately five (5) feet from the ground. Also, clearly visible on either side of the doorway. (Knox recommends six (6) feet in height, however we require five (5) feet) The box may be external or flush mount depending on the choice of the owner / occupant. Every effort should be made to follow installation instructions provided by the manufacturer for securing the key box to the building. Any deviation from the published installation instructions must be pre-approved by the Fire Marshal of the Columbus Division of Fire.

If the riser room has access from the outside, a separate lock box shall be installed adjacent to the exterior riser room access door. A 1600 series is optional for this type of location. If the Riser room door is less than fifty (50) feet from the main entrance Knox key box, it will not need a key box.

1.2 Contents of Rapid Entry Access Box:

The owner / occupant is required to have the following contents within the rapid entry key box system. All keys must be marked for ease of identification.

- Key(s) to locked points of access to the structures main entrance
- Key(s) to locked mechanical rooms
- Key(s) to locked electrical rooms
- Sprinkler and/or Riser Room
- Keys to access generator
- Keys to access roof hatch
- Any other locked areas as required by the Fire Marshal of the Columbus Division of Fire or specified during the plans review process
- Any alarm room/fire control panel, if present
- Keys to reset pull stations
- Up to date emergency contact list for the premises and/or occupant

1.3 Quantity of Keys for the Rapid Entry Access Box:

Most Buildings - Two sets of keys (see list above) shall be provided.
High Rise Buildings – Four sets of keys (see list above) shall be provided
Buildings over 250,000 sq. ft. - Four sets of keys (see list above) shall be provided

2.0 Elevator Key Box:

When an occupancy chooses to install an elevator key box, a model 1403 series box, with dual *drop key* holder, may be purchased from the Knox Company.

The purchaser installs the elevator box according to the included installation guidelines. Once the elevator box is installed, the building owner should contact the Columbus Division of Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786 to schedule an inspection of the installation for compliance with the installation guidelines and to have the elevator keys placed inside the elevator box. Future access to add or remove a key from the box should be coordinated by calling (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786 to make an appointment. The elevator box is designed to contain only the key for the operation of the elevator and access to the related elevator equipment.

- The front cover shall be permanently labeled with the words “Fire Department Use Only —Elevator Keys.”
- The elevator key box shall be mounted at each elevator bank in the lobby nearest to the lowest level of Fire Department access.
- The elevator key box shall be mounted approximately five (5) feet above the finished floor to the right side of the elevator bank.
- Contents of the elevator key box are limited to fire service elevator keys, elevator door keys/tools, and keys to elevator related mechanical rooms, including locked stairwell doors, when needed.
- In buildings with two or more elevator banks, a single key box shall be permitted to be used when such elevator banks are separated by not more than thirty (30) feet.

2.1 Contents of Elevator Box:

The owner / occupant is required to have the following contents within the elevator key box. All contents of the box such as keys must be marked for ease of identification for use.

- Elevator Fire Service Key
- Keys for elevator mechanical / electrical rooms and access to stairways
- Elevator key/tool (*drop key*) for external elevator door

2.2 Quantity of Keys for the Elevator Key Box:

Three sets of keys (see list above), and two drop keys shall be provided.

3.0 Hazmat Cabinet:

Any facility required to comply with the rapid entry program that uses, maintains, distributes, or destroys hazardous materials or hazardous waste may install a Hazmat Cabinet (Knox Cabinet 1300 Series Dual Lock). The purchaser installs the cabinet according to the

installation guidelines. Once the hazmat cabinet is installed, the building owner should contact the Columbus Division of Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786 to schedule an inspection of the installation for compliance with the installation guidelines.

3.1 Contents of Hazmat Cabinet:

- A current list of facility management personnel knowledgeable about safety procedures of materials on site, complete with telephone numbers for such personnel in the event of an incident after normal business hours
- Alphabetical listing of chemicals, their locations, and approximate quantity and strength
- A binder containing the material safety data (MSD) sheets. In the event that the volume of the MSD sheets is too great to keep in the HazMat cabinet, a location list of the onsite MSD sheets shall be provided
- Emergency contact information for the chemical companies of products in facility
- A facility site plan, including room numbering system, to include the following:
 - The location of storage and use of hazardous materials on site;
 - The location of on-site emergency fire-fighting and spill clean-up equipment;
 - Secondary containment vessels
 - Ventilation systems
 - A diagram of the complete sewer system and the water system, showing fire hydrant and water main locations and sizes

3.2 Location of Hazmat Cabinet:

The Hazardous Material Cabinet shall be located on the premises to the front of the building on a metal post or appropriate structure erected for the Hazmat Cabinet. It shall be located at the furthest point away from the building that is accessible to the emergency responders. The Hazardous Material Cabinet should be mounted between four to six feet from the ground.

4.0 Gates and Barriers:

Gates that are electric or chained will require a Knox Toggle Switch / 3200 Knox Box or a Knox Padlock.

4.1 Manual (non-automatic) Gates and Barriers:

All barriers placed across fire access roadways are determined to be obstructions and are therefore prohibited unless specifically approved by the Division of Fire. Manual gates shall be provided with an approved method for emergency access. Approved methods shall consist of a Knox padlock.

- A Knox padlock is required where a chain or manual gate is being utilized. The Knox padlock shall be installed.
- Where multiple padlocks are used on a single gate, the padlocks shall be daisy-chained together. This will allow access for the property owner and Division of Fire personnel

4.2 Automatic Gates and Barriers:

All automatic access gates across fire access roadways shall be equipped with an emergency agency approved Knox toggle switch. The switch shall be installed in a 3200 series Knox Box.

4.2.1 Toggle Switch Function and Location:

A Knox toggle switch shall be installed at the entry control panel for fire department and emergency medical use. Activation of the switch shall over-ride all functions and open the gate(s). Panel location must be approved by the fire department.

- Upon activation of the toggle switch, the gate shall remain open until returned to normal operation by means of the key switch.
- When deactivated by the Fire Department, only then will the gate resume normal operation.
- The emergency toggle switch shall open both the entrance and exit gate(s) when gate(s) are in close proximity to each other.
- The emergency toggle switch / Knox Box shall be located at the card/code keypad pedestal.
- The Knox Box shall be mounted five (5) feet from the ground
- The toggle switch / Knox Box shall be located below a sign labeled "FD ACCESS." The sign shall be 8" x 4" with white reflective lettering on a red background.

5.0 Access Control Devices

When access points (Main Entry Doors) are secured with magnetic locks or electric strikes, contact the Division of Fire for method of approval for entry.

6.0 Pedestrian Gates:

When the primary access point has a pedestrian gate, the gate will be required to have a means for Fire Department access. Contact the Division of Fire for method of approval for entry.

7.0 Locking FDC Caps:

In an effort to improve security of the fire department connections for sprinkler and standpipe systems, the Columbus Division of Fire can require the use of locking FDC caps.

The locking FDC cap was developed to protect fire sprinkler and standpipe connections from accidental damage, vandalism, and physical attack. Installation of the locking FDC caps ensures sprinklers / standpipes reliability and building safety, by preventing foreign objects from entering the sprinkler system.

Locking FDC Caps, with swivel guard, or StorzGuard caps are required for all fire sprinkler and standpipe systems. These caps prevent debris from entering and damaging the system and obstructing water flow. When an occupancy chooses or is directed to provide locking FDC caps, the locking FDC caps may be purchased from the Knox Company online.

- **New Systems** – The property owners shall be notified by the Fire Prevention Bureau during the plan review phase, regarding the requirement and installation of approved locking FDC caps. It is recommended that the caps be installed as soon as the system passes the acceptance testing. Any work on the sprinkler or standpipe system that requires a permit, will require locking FDC caps to be installed.

- **Existing Systems** - The property owners may purchase the locking FDC caps from the Knox Company online. If a Fire Inspector believes the security of the FDC has been compromised or missing, he or she can order the installation of locking Knox Caps by Ohio Fire Code. ***(The FDC will need to be cleared by a licensed 3rd party fire protection company prior to the locking FDC caps are placed on.)*** The Fire Prevention Bureau can install the caps. Call (614) 206-5927 or (614) 206-5786 to schedule. With the City of Columbus, fire protection companies that are licensed through the Building Department can install locking FDC caps as well.