



CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fire Marshal Division

Information Bulletin

Knox Box Installation Requirements

Rapid access to properties after hours or during an incident is paramount during an emergency event. The South Carolina Fire Code provides minimum requirements for access by firefighters through key boxes, security gates, elevator controls, and similar items to improve our response. The Charleston Fire Department utilizes the Knox company as the recognized and accepted system to achieve compliance with the SC Fire Code.

The information contained in this document is intended to assist you with determining the need for a rapid access system, identifying our expectations, guiding you in selecting the appropriate device, and providing information on the ordering process. Please note that each location needs to be approved prior to ordering or installation. Following installation, a verification inspection will be conducted to confirm the installation location, installation method, and review accept the contents of the box.

Required installation:

One or more key boxes will be required in all newly constructed or substantially remodeled buildings that include a fire alarm system, fire sprinkler system, or hazardous materials or at any facility which may be difficult to access. Large facilities, high-rises, or areas which may require immediate access, may require multiple rapid access devices positioned at strategic locations.

Facilities that store hazardous materials in quantities that require them to report under SARA Title III are required to install Knox Cabinets to store MSDS and plans for emergency responders. Additionally, this is required through Charleston County Ordinance 1139.

Properties with security gates, perimeter gates, fencing or similar devices securing access roads must be addressed in accordance with our information bulletin "Fire Apparatus Access Roads – Gates and Barricades."

Rapid Access Devices:

- **Commercial Key Boxes:** Key vault intended to provide rapid key access to the facility. All new construction and substantial renovations shall utilize a recessed Knox Box. All boxes installed or added within the historic area regulated by the Charleston Board of Architectural Review (BAR) shall be recessed. Typical orders that do not require a special request:
 - 3200 Series Knox Boxes on all buildings requiring 10 or fewer keys.
 - 4400 Series Knox Boxes on all buildings requiring 25 or more keys or proximity cards.
- **Remote power box:** These device(s) remotely operate a shunt trip breaker to disconnect power and will be required when directed or requested during plan review or for specific hazards.
- **Switches:** Designed to eliminate perimeter barriers that delay emergency response onto a property or into a building. Also utilized to control or override critical low voltage items.
- **Padlock:** Exterior padlocks utilize the same master key used by the department and provide access to occasional use areas, typically for a short period of time.
- **Elevator Boxes:** Designed specifically for elevator lobbies to provide rapid access for first responders to enter inoperable elevators and critical areas.
- **Residential Boxes:** Intended for smaller applications at residential properties. Mounted residential may be allowed, unmounted (mobile) boxes are not allowed.

Ordering Instructions:

The owner, contractor, or designated representative is responsible for ordering the Knox Box. The box should be ordered as soon as the proposed device has been accepted to allow for shipping and installation. To order a Knox Box online, please complete the following steps:

1. Go to www.knoxbox.com and:
 - a. Click **To see availability, choose your local fire department** at the top left of the screen.
 - b. In the **Your Location** field, select South Carolina.
 - c. In the **Local Fire Department/Agency** field enter “Charleston Fire Dept, City of”.
 - d. Then click **Search** and verify the agency by clicking **Select**.
2. The approved products will be displayed, and you can move forward with your selection(s).
3. As a reminder, any boxes installed in the historic district must be recessed mounted.
4. Complete the fields as prompted.
5. Please allow 6 – 8 weeks for delivery.

Installation:

Installation shall be in accordance with the manufacturer's installation guidelines that accompany the key security box and the information contained within this document. Improperly installed boxes will not be approved.

Location:

All locations shall be reviewed and approved by the Fire Marshal's Office before installation. Failure to properly locate the key box may result in its relocation.

Generally, Knox Box installation locations will be at or near the recognized public or designated Fire Department entrance that leads to the fire annunciator panel. Key boxes shall be positioned at a height of three (3'-0") to five (5'-0") feet above finished grade, measured to the centerline of the box. Alternate installation heights will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The installation location shall be sheltered from moisture and shall be located away from displays, signs, fixtures, or structural protrusions that may restrict access to the box.

Knox cabinets, when required, must be located away from the building, but on the property.

Keys:

Keys for the box should include a master or primary key(s), fire alarm panel, pull station, electrical panels, and elevator fire service key.

Each key shall be clearly labeled as to its use by engraving or durable plastic or metal tag(s). Labels must be engraved or laminated - handwritten labels are not acceptable.

Each set of keys shall be placed on a standard metal key ring. Buildings 1 story in height will require one set of keys. Buildings 2-4 stories tall will require two sets of keys. Buildings 5 or more stories will require at least 4 sets of keys. Large facilities may require multiple Knox boxes at strategic locations.

Lock Down:

Upon successful installation of the box, receipt of properly labeled keys, and receipt of emergency contact names and phone numbers, the keys will be placed in the box and the box secured.

Please contact the City of Charleston Fire Department – Fire Marshal's Office at (843)724-3429 with any questions or for additional information.