



# Allegany County Emergency Services Board Policies and Standards

**Subject: Knox Box Policy**

**Approved: March 24, 2023**

**Approved:** W. Thom M., **Emergency Services Board Chair**

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. In a continued effort to provide Fire and EMS Companies / Departments emergency access and building security for property owners, the Allegany County Emergency Service Board has selected the KNOX Public Safety Key System for use in accomplishment of these goals. The system allows emergency services personnel access to a key for non-destructive entry into a building.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Access Box – Refers to the box located on the exterior of a building containing master keys, key cards, and etc... The Access Box is only accessible by Allegany County Fire and EMS Companies / Departments who are issued a compatible KNOX Master Key.
- 2.2. DES – Allegany County Department of Emergency Services.
- 2.3. PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) - Allegany County 911 Joint Communication Center.
- 2.4. AHJ (Authority Having Jurisdiction) - The authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) is the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) or the legally appointed designee. (State Fire Prevention Code, NFPA 1.05 (B)).
- 2.5. Emergency Services Companies / Departments – Refers to volunteer and career Fire and EMS services in Allegany County.
- 2.6. Key Retention System – A KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure locking device, usually mounted in the cab of emergency services unit that grips the KNOX master key and prevents unauthorized use unless released by a Company / Department specific pin code.
- 2.7. KNOX Master Key – A key universal to Allegany County that operates KNOX Access Boxes,

KNOX Key Switches, and KNOX Padlocks installed at buildings and facilities.

2.8. CAD – Computer Aided Dispatch System.

2.9. OSFM – Office of the State Fire Marshal

2.10. NFPA – National Fire Protection Association

### **3. AUTHORITY**

- 1.1. This is a mandatory system for commercial properties with automatic alarms and where entry may be difficult because of internal security systems. It is also a voluntary program for non-alarmed commercial and residential properties in the State of Maryland.
- 1.2. KNOX Systems may be required by the AHJ, when access to or within a building, structure or area is difficult because of secure openings or where immediate access is necessary for life saving or fire suppression purposes.
- 1.3. Refer to Section 18.2.2.1, 18.2.2.2, and 18.2.2.3 of NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code and the State of Maryland Fire Prevention Code. NFPA 1 is adopted by COMAR via the State Fire Protection Code.

### **4. GENERAL**

- 4.1. Operating a KNOX System shall be through a single universal KNOX master key available only from the DES. The universal KNOX master key can operate KNOX Access Boxes, KNOX Key Switches, and Knox Padlocks. This Knox master key shall be held in the unit by a Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure key retention system. The KNOX master key is released from the KNOX retention system by an approved method.
  - 4.1.1. No KNOX master key is issued unless secured in a KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure retention system.
  - 4.1.2. KNOX Access Boxes shall be of heavy duty or extra heavy duty construction. Recess mount style boxes are recommended.
  - 4.1.3. Individual building keys will not be issued to Fire / EMS Companies / Departments in place of having master keys in the KNOX Access Box.

- 4.2. It is recommended, and may be required through the OSFM, that a KNOX System is installed on existing buildings with a fire sprinkler or fire alarm system or where access is difficult.
- 4.3. Local Emergency Services Chiefs may recommend property owners to install a KNOX System.
- 4.4. KNOX Systems are required on all new buildings with a fire sprinkler and / or fire alarm system or where access is difficult in accordance with NFPA 1.
- 4.5. Use of, or controls to, gates, chains, switches or any device to control access may use a Padlock or Key Switch compatible with the current KNOX System.

## **5. MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1. The DES designee will act as the DES program manager.
- 5.2. The DES program manager will coordinate the initial purchase and programming of KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure key retention systems.
  - 5.2.1. The DES program manager shall maintain a current list containing the locations of KNOX master key serial numbers, KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure key retention systems, and the Emergency Services Chief officer that accepted the KNOX master key.
- 5.3. The DES program manager will forward an updated list of KNOX System protected property to all Emergency Service Department Chiefs and the OSFM–Western Region as requested.
- 5.4. The DES program manager will facilitate a periodic audit of KNOX System master keys and the Sentralok-A and KeySecure retention systems is completed.
- 5.5. The PSAP's CAD will be updated to reflect the addresses of installed KNOX Systems.

## **6. ACCESS BOX LOCATION**

- 6.1. The mounting location for all KNOX systems shall be installed as follows:
  - 6.1.1. Mounted as near as possible to the primary entry door and shall not be visually obstructed. This normally will be the main entrance door to the business. The KNOX System shall not be located further than six feet laterally from the door.

- 6.1.2. Approach to the KNOX System shall not be obstructed by landscaping or architectural elements.
- 6.1.3. KNOX System shall not be mounted higher than five feet or lower than two feet above the ground or walk area.
- 6.1.4. Multiple KNOX systems are required for buildings or properties that present a specific life safety or access obstacles. Location examples include: alternative entrances such as rear or side doors, doors near fire department connections, or access points for buildings that present a non-typical entry points. Building types Nursing Homes, Schools, Colleges, Day Care, Industrial Facilities, Hospitals, Shopping Centers, Hotels, Multi-story Apartments, Strip Business or Downtown Businesses and or structures over 15,000 square feet.
- 6.1.5. The KNOX System for a gate shall be located on the gate or on the fence within 6 feet of the gate.

## **7. ENTRY KEYS**

- 7.1. Keys necessary for building entry shall be placed inside the Access Box and shall be adequately labeled. Keys shall be limited to two set and shall be attached to a substantially constructed key ring.
- 7.2. The Access Box shall also contain the following:
  - 7.2.1. Keys to locked points of ingress, whether on the interior or exterior of the building.
  - 7.2.2. Keys to locked electrical rooms.
  - 7.2.3. Keys to locked mechanical equipment room
  - 7.2.4. Keys to fire alarm panels.
  - 7.2.5. Keys to elevators.
  - 7.2.6. Swipe Cards and Key Code Cards
  - 7.2.7. Fobs
  - 7.2.8. Information on special circumstances such as hazardous material information, hazards, and structural dangers.

## **8. PURCHASING**

- 8.1. All KNOX Systems shall be purchased, installed, and maintained by the property owner. Purchasing information may be obtained by contacting DES at 301-876-9155.
- 8.2. All items used in the access key system must be manufactured by the KNOX Company, to include access boxes, keys, switches and padlocks. Any style of Knox systems offered by the KNOX Company is eligible for use by property owners. No other type of lock boxes or additional keys is acceptable.

## **9. SECURING THE ACCESS BOX**

- 9.1. After the KNOX system is installed, the owner shall contact DES at 301-876-9155 to make arrangements to lock the KNOX Key Box, KNOX Padlock, or KNOX Key Switch.
  - 9.1.1 The DES will contact the local emergency services representative who will arrange to meet the building representative to lock the KNOX System and thus secure building keys.
- 9.2. ONLY Allegany County Emergency Service Departments / Companies will have Knox System master keys to access KNOX Lock Boxes, Knox Padlocks, and Knox Key Switches. Property owners may not have keys or direct access to the Knox System. Emergency Services Departments / Companies will only be issued master keys that are secured in a KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure retention system.
- 9.3. The property owner must contact the DES (to make arrangements) to update contents in the KNOX System.

## **10. EMERGENCY SERVICES KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 10.1. DES will administer the KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure key retention system, and supervision of the Knox master keys.
  - 10.1.1. Each individual emergency services department is responsible for purchasing and installation of the KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure key retention systems.

- 10.2. Prior to issuing a unit its KNOX Master-Key, a KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure Key Retention System must be installed. This device captures the master-key used to operate all Allegany County KNOX Systems. The key is released by a Company / Department specific pin programed by the DES.
- 10.3. All KNOX System master keys issued will be retained in the KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure key retention system.
- 10.4. KNOX System pin codes will not be posted on the KNOX Sentralok-A or Knox KeySecure unit.
- 10.5. All KNOX System master keys shall have a key tag attached to them that contains the below information:
  - 10.5.1. "Property of DES"
  - 10.5.2. "If found immediately contact DES at 301-876-1955"
  - 10.5.3. The key tag shall also list the unit it is assigned.

## **11. KNOX Sentralok-A and KNOX KeySecure Key Retention System**

- 11.1. The KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure Key Retention System pin programing process.
  - 11.1.1. The DES will assign and program a Company / Department specific pin code to each Company / Department.
  - 11.1.2. The Chief is responsible for issuing the PIN to those requiring its use within their organization.
  - 11.1.3. If a Chief at any time feels the pin has been compromised, they may contact the DES program manager to have it changed.
  - 11.1.4. The DES will maintain a master list of Company / Department pin codes in a double enveloped system to be issued by the PSAP if a specific unit for got their pin.
  - 11.1.5. The release of this PIN to a Company / Department by the PSAP is only in case of an emergency if a unit is on an incident and unable to remember the correct pin.
  - 11.1.6. All others requests for pins and pin changes will go to the DES program manager.
- 11.2. The KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure Key Retention System key release process.
  - 11.2.1. The Company Officer will broadcast over the assigned operational channel to the PSAP that they are releasing the KNOX key: i.e. "Engine 4-3-1 is releasing the KNOX key" or "Paramedic 355 is releasing the KNOX key".

- 11.2.2. The Dispatcher will then make a CAD note under their specific incident that the KNOX key has been released.
- 11.2.3. The Company specific pin code is then entered into the KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure unit by the Company Officer.
- 11.2.4. The Company Officer will then ensure the KNOX Master Key is used to open the Knox Box, Knox Pad Lock or other such KNOX device.
- 11.2.5. As applicable, once all keys have been returned to the KNOX box or KNOX devices, the Company Officer will return the KNOX Master Key to the KNOX Sentralok-A or KNOX KeySecure Retention System. The Amber Strobe will turn off once the Knox Master Key is secure.
- 11.2.6. The Company Officer will broadcast over the assigned operational channel to the PSAP that they have returned the Knox Key: i.e. "Engine 4-3-1 KNOX key returned" or "Paramedic 355 KNOX key returned".
- 11.2.7. The Dispatcher will then make a CAD note under their specific incident that the KNOX key has been released.

## **12. MISSING KEY**

- 12.1. Missing KNOX Master-Keys shall be reported immediately to the Company / Department Officer-In-Charge at that time the key is determined missing.
- 12.2. The Company / Department Officer-In-Charge will immediately notify the PSAP; the Dispatcher Supervisor will then notify the DES Program Manager immediately.