A Well-Rounded Knox Program

Learn how Gainesville, Georgia Fire Department manages their emergency access needs. Read More...

Around 10 years ago, Gainesville, Georgia adopted the International Fire Code for their community. This code grants the department the authority to require businesses to have a key box for emergency access. After adopting the code, Gainesville decided to implement the key box provision in their jurisdiction. After exploring their different options, they settled on the Knox System as the key box for their community.

Once the code was adopted, Gainesville began implementing the requirement for a key box. They started by incorporating the requirement into their current procedures for both new construction and existing buildings.

When a building is being built or remodeled, the project must go through the plan review process. The requirement for a key box was added to the review process and is treated no differently than any other requirement. Existing buildings were brought up to code during their annual inspection. Businesses were made aware of the requirement and the time frame to bring their building up to code. The key box requirement is just one of many checklist items that are reviewed and/or inspected during the annual inspection.

All businesses with a fire alarm or sprinkler system located in Gainesville's jurisdiction are required to have a key box. Smaller stores in strip malls are handled on a case by case basis and in many instances can share one box with the other businesses in the strip mall.

Gainesville has experienced many benefits from implementing the Knox System. They've been able to "eliminate waiting for a business owner" and been able to access minor problems much earlier. In the past, "if we couldn't see the smoke after doing the preliminary walk around, we couldn't tell they had a problem," said Fire Marshal Jerome Yarbrough. Now with a Knox-Box they're able to gain access without having to wait and resolve these smaller incidents before they grow.

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