



July 12, 2002

**Internal Audit Report 2002-9  
Knox Box Program  
Anchorage Fire Department**

**Introduction.** The Anchorage Fire Department utilizes the Knox Box Security System as a way to provide a nondestructive means to quickly and conveniently gain access to locked structures. According to the Fire Department, participation in the Knox Box Rapid Entry System is mandatory for triplex or larger residences as well as commercial and public buildings built after adoption of the 1997 Uniform Fire Code. Article 9, Section 902.4, of the Fire Code states the following:

“When access to or within a structure or an area is unduly difficult because of secured openings or where immediate access is necessary for life-saving or firefighting purposes, the chief is authorized to require a key box to be installed in an accessible location. The key box shall be of an approved type and shall contain keys to gain necessary access as required by the chief.”

Currently, there are approximately 800 buildings participating in the Knox Box Rapid Entry System as documented by the Fire Prevention Division. The Plan Review Section of the Fire Prevention Division is tasked with ensuring compliance with the 1997 Uniform Fire Code for installation of the Knox Boxes on new construction. If a Knox Box is determined to be required on a building, the Plans Review Section will not issue a Certificate of Occupancy until the Knox Box has been installed. Fire Department personnel are provided with a master key that can unlock the Knox Boxes installed throughout the Municipality. Additionally, sub-master keys are provided to the Anchorage School District (ASD) and Facility Maintenance Division personnel to access Knox Boxes installed on Municipal and School District buildings. The sub-master keys cannot unlock Knox Boxes installed on commercial buildings. Fire Department Policy, Procedure and Instruction (PPI) 900-23 details the procedures for the Knox Box program.

**Scope.** The objective of this audit was to evaluate the procedures and controls over the Knox Box Security System. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, except for the requirement of an external quality control review, and accordingly, included tests of accounting records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. The audit was performed during the period of May through June 2002. The audit was requested by Administration.

**Overall Evaluation.** Overall, the Fire Prevention Division of the Anchorage Fire Department has established adequate controls and procedures for the Knox Box Security System. There were, however, several issues requiring improvement. The Knox Box keys held in the Fire Prevention Division were not adequately secured. Further, we could not verify the number of master and sub-master keys that the Fire Prevention Division said they had acquired from the Knox Company. Knox Box actions were not documented on the Fire/EMS reports. Dispatch personnel were not monitoring or documenting the status of the Knox Box keys once the key was released. All map books did not contain Knox Box locations. Finally, we found a general lack of knowledge of the Knox Box PPI 900-23 by some Fire Department personnel.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Knox Box Keys in Fire Prevention Division Not Adequately Secured.**

- a. Finding.** The keys held by the Fire Prevention Division were not adequately secured. Fire Prevention personnel had nine Knox Box keys that had not been issued to operational units. The Knox Box Program Manager had two keys, one broken key stored in his desk and one key unsecured in his vehicle. The remaining seven keys were in a locked filing cabinet in the Fire Marshall's office.
- b. Recommendation.** Keys held by the Fire Prevention Division should be properly secured to prevent loss or unauthorized use.

- c. **Management Comments.** Management stated, “The Knox keys are locked in a key box and the key box is locked in a filing cabinet in the Fire Marshal’s office. (This confidential file cabinet will be moved into a locked closet). The Knox Program Manager now has a Sentralock decoder installed in his vehicle. All broken keys are to be returned to Fire Prevention. To date a total of two keys have been damaged and required replacement - these keys are secured in the Knox Key Box. A “Replacement Key” procedure has been added to the Knox P&I.”
  
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

2. **Number of Master Keys Not Verifiable.**

- a. **Finding.** The Fire Department was not able to provide documentation evidencing the number of master keys the Anchorage Fire Department obtained from the Knox Company. As a result, we could not determine whether all keys acquired were accounted for. The Fire Prevention records reflect that there are 40 keys currently in the possession of the Fire Department. However, we were only able to find invoices for 34 master keys.
  
- b. **Recommendation.** The Fire Department should clearly document the total number of Knox Box keys that have been obtained from the Knox Company.
  
- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “Knox Company could not produce invoices for the 40 keys they issued. AFD had invoices for 34 Knox keys and an e-mail from Knox Company confirming 40 keys were issued to the Anchorage Fire Department. There is no charge for the Knox keys. (Knox Company is in process of searching additional invoices for the 6 keys). Fire Prevention will maintain a copy of all invoices for Knox keys in the future.”

- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

3. **Number of Sub-Master Keys Not Verifiable.**

- a. **Finding.** The Fire Prevention Division was not able to provide documentation evidencing the total number of sub-master keys the Anchorage Fire Department had acquired from the Knox Company. During an interview with the Program Manager, we were told that four sub-master keys had been issued. Two of the sub-master keys were said to have been issued to the ASD and the other two to the Facility Maintenance Division. We contacted the ASD locksmith and found that the ASD had four sub-master keys. We also contacted the locksmith for the Facility Maintenance Division and found that they had two sub-master keys. However, we found no documentation of the sub-master keys being issued to anyone. Further, we were only able to find invoices for two sub-master keys from the Knox Company. Finally, the keys had not been numbered by Fire Prevention personnel before they were issued.
- b. **Recommendation.** The Fire Prevention Division should maintain documentation of the number of sub-master keys issued and who is in possession of those keys.
- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “Sub-Masters are now documented. Both the ASD and MOA have signed for their sub-master keys. Sub-masters are now numbered.”
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

**4. Knox Box Actions Not Documented on Fire/EMS Reports.**

- a. **Finding.** None of the Fire/EMS personnel interviewed were documenting Knox Box actions on the Fire/EMS reports. PPI 900-23, Section 1.3.3, states that, “At any time a Knox Box is accessed, there will be a recorded or written record. Response units will note Knox Box actions on the Fire/EMS report section under ‘Knox Box Action.’”
- b. **Recommendation.** Knox Box actions should be annotated on the Fire/EMS reports as required by PPI 900-23.
- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “the P&I clearly states the procedures for response personnel.”
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

**5. Knox Box Status Not Monitored by Dispatch.**

- a. **Finding.** Dispatch personnel were not monitoring the status of the Knox Box keys after initial release as required in Section 1.3.5 of PPI 900-23. We also found that, although Dispatch personnel were aware of the procedure to document the use of Knox Box keys, they did not always document that the key was secured after its initial release. Our sample of five incidents revealed that, for four out of the five incidents where a Knox Box key was released, there was no evidence that the Knox Box key was secured after the incident.
- b. **Recommendation.** Dispatch personnel should monitor the status of Knox Box keys when they are released to Fire/EMS personnel. If they have not received notification

that the key has been returned to the Knox Box unit, Dispatch personnel should follow-up to determine the status.

- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “the P&I clearly states the procedures for Dispatch.”
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

6. **Knox Box Locations Not Entered on Some Map Books as Required by PPI 900-23, Section 1.4.4.**

- a. **Finding.** Some Fire/EMS units did not have map books with Knox Box key locations noted on them. We reviewed nine Fire/EMS units and found that three did not have map books with Knox Box location information noted on them. For the other six, the locations were not kept up-to-date nor were the locations identified as stated in PPI 900-23, Section 1.4.4. We also found that the CAD system used by Dispatch did not have Knox Box information. PPI 900-23, Section 1.4.4, states,

“The address of all structures that have a Knox Box will be noted in the map books of all Fire Department units that carry a Knox Box key and the map books that Dispatch utilizes. This will be accomplished utilizing a small ‘skeleton key’ stamp and a green inkpad, which will be issued to each station and to dispatch. The ‘skeleton key’ and inkpad will be kept in the Officer and Lead Dispatchers desks. A key stamp will be placed next to the map page number of any map page that contains the address of a Knox Box location and a stamp will also be placed on the address itself.”

- b. **Recommendation.** In accordance with PPI 900-23, units with Knox Box keys should have updated map books with the Knox Box locations noted on them. Further, Dispatch should be given map books with the Knox Box locations noted on them.
- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “The Knox boxes have been entered into the “new” CAD map pages.”
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

7. **Lack of Knox Box PPI 900-23 Knowledge.**

- a. **Finding.** During interviews with numerous Fire Department personnel, we found most Fire Department personnel, including the Chief of Communications, were not aware of PPI 900-23 regarding the Knox Box Program.
- b. **Recommendation.** All Fire Department personnel should be required to familiarize and comply with Fire Department Policy, Procedure and Instructions.
- c. **Management Comments.** Management concurred and stated, “All personnel should be aware of all AFD policies and instructions. The Knox P&I will be addressed in the upcoming AFD cable program.”
- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation,

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**Discussion With Responsible Officials.** The results of this audit were discussed with appropriate Municipal officials on July 3, 2002.

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