

ENSURING BUILDING SECURITY THROUGH PROPER KEY CONTROL

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Clients often fall into three categories of approach to key control:

1. Create accountability through the use of their resources such as card reader technology.
2. Utilize security staff to issue and account for the contractor's keys.
3. Shift the full responsibility to the contractor at the start of the contract by transferring possession of the keys to them.

In the case of the first two options, the contractor has an obligation to train its employees in compliance as well as having a mechanism to communicate any deviations from the protocol. There is also an obligation to communicate with the client on any systemic issues that surface with a great sense of urgency.

The same could be said of the training and communication in the case of the third and most common option. However, the contractor needs to proactively maintain the system. In many instances, the McLemore janitorial service takeover process identifies the following concern:

ISSUE

The client is not fully aware of what keys they and/or the outgoing contractors have, because their records are incomplete.

SOLUTION

A keys needs assessment and inventory should take place in the earlier stages of the account transition process, before possession is transferred. This is a prime opportunity to have the outgoing contractor right a situation, often at their expense, if they should have a contributory role to the gap of knowledge.

Once documentation is complete, and all locks are determined to be secure, then the chain of custody and measures taken can be agreed upon and implemented. It is recommended that the chain of custody utilized in the documentation of the key transfer process be utilized when other changes take place.

ADDITIONAL KEY CONTROL BEST PRACTICE

Another best practice is to restrict the need for keys to be taken off site. In addition to creating an opportunity for duplication and misuse, what happens if an employee accidentally takes the keys out of town during the annual vacation? Rather than to allow this possibility, it is recommended that the contractor install a lock box, with a record of keys issued, a log for daily assignment and a key code to help identify the purpose of each key.

An unannounced key audit and documentation of its results ensures the system is in place and being utilized properly. When doing so follow these guidelines:

- Reconcile the keys to the records
- Confirm the procedure for exchange of the keys including who is authorized to sign them out
- Inspect keys to be welded
- Ensure keys to be tagged are clearly identified
- Re-train staff on key control processes
- The lock box or method of securing keys should be verified