

Scotts Valley Fire Protection SVFPD	
POLICY: 701	SUBJECT: Knox Box / Knox Keys
DATE APPROVED: 11/12/2025	
BOARD PRESIDENT: 	FIRE CHIEF: 

Purpose

To provide timely, safe, and secure access by fire, rescue, and other emergency personnel to buildings and properties for emergency operations, while protecting property integrity and ensuring compliance with state law and local ordinances.

Scope

This policy applies to all SVFPD personnel. This policy also applies to all new and existing commercial, multi-family residential, institutional, and other non-single-family dwellings as defined by local ordinance, as well as any other buildings or uses designated by the Fire Marshal as requiring Knox access.

Authority

This policy is adopted under the authority of the California Health & Safety Code, local municipal codes, and/or fire protection district regulations. It is consistent with NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) standards, California Building Code, and/or any local ordinance on access for emergency responders.

Definitions

- Knox Box / Knox Key Safe — A secure, mounted lockbox (or vault) on a building’s exterior containing keys or key cards that allow authorized emergency personnel to gain access without delay.
- Knox Access System — The set of hardware, keys, key switches, keycards, access codes, or electronic access that is registered with the Knox Company and maintained for emergency access.
- Authorized Personnel — Fire district personnel and other responders recognized by the fire chief or designee.
- Owner / Responsible Party — The owner, property manager, or other person responsible for a building/property.
- Fire Code Official / Fire Marshal — The person at the Scotts Valley Fire Protection District (SVFPD) charged with enforcement of the Fire Code and related policies.

Requirements

1. **Installation of Knox Box**
 - a. All buildings required under this policy must install a Fire District-approved Knox Box or Knox Key Safe at a location approved by the Fire Marshal.

Scotts Valley Fire Protection SVFPD	
POLICY: 701	SUBJECT: Knox Box / Knox Keys

- b. The box must be installed in a highly visible and accessible location, typically adjacent to the main entrance, clear of obstructions, and at a height of approximately 5 feet above grade, unless a different height is approved due to special circumstances.
 - c. The box must be of sufficient size to hold required keys, keycards, or access devices.
- 2. Access Devices**
- a. All properties identified under this policy or by the Fire Marshal must install a Fire District-approved Knox access system.
 - b. Access Devices shall be installed as directed by the Fire Marshal.
- 3. Keys**
- a. Property Owner must supply all keys, access cards, or codes necessary to enter all exterior doors, gates, and interior doors necessary for emergency response (e.g. mechanical rooms, elevator controls, fire alarm panel, riser rooms). All keys placed in a Knox Box shall be done so by the responsible party on file or their designee. Keys shall not be given to any Fire District Personnel with the expectation they will be secured in the Knox Box.
 - b. If access is by electronic means (key card, code, biometric), the property owner shall ensure the emergency personnel maintain access (e.g. functional cards, valid codes) at all times.
 - c. The Fire District shall keep an inventory of all Knox Keys and where they are located. The Keys shall have a unique number system to identify the keys if they are misplaced or stolen. All Knox Keys shall be secured in a locked box when not in use.
- 2. Maintenance and Inspection**
- a. The property owner is responsible for maintaining the Knox Box, keeping it in working order, unlocked, clean and visible.
 - b. The Fire District reserves the right to inspect the Knox Box periodically (e.g. annually) to confirm compliance. Knox Boxes found inoperable or non-compliance shall be replaced by the property owner.
 - c. If the Knox Box is found damaged, keys missing, or entry impeded, the owner must repair or replace within a specified timeframe as provided by the Fire Marshall (e.g. 30 days or less, depending on severity).
- 3. Registration and Access Control**
- a. The property owner must register the Knox Box with the Fire District and provide an inventory of the keys/access devices inside.
 - b. The Fire District will maintain a secure database of premises with Knox access, keys provided, and responsible contacts.

Scotts Valley Fire Protection SVFPD	
POLICY: 701	SUBJECT: Knox Box / Knox Keys

- c. Only authorized emergency personnel are permitted to access the Knox Box. Unauthorized removal of keys or access devices is prohibited and subject to penalty.

4. Costs and Fees

- a. All costs associated with the purchase, installation, maintenance, and replacement of Knox Boxes or other access devices shall be the responsibility of the property owner. In areas where multiple agencies may respond first and more than one access device is required, the Fire District may purchase and install additional device(s), leaving the primary agency's device(s) for the property owner to install.
- b. The Fire District may charge a non-refundable fee for processing registration.
- c. The District may also charge penalties or enforcement fees if an owner fails to comply with this policy within required deadlines.

5. Enforcement and Penalties

- a. Violations of this policy are subject to code enforcement action, which may include citation, fines, or orders to comply.
- b. For emergency access delays caused by non-compliance, the Fire District may require proof of corrective action or impose additional penalties.

6. Special Cases

- a. Historic buildings, remote locations, or sites with unusual access conditions may be granted exceptions or alternative solutions (e.g. centralized master key programs or alternative access devices) by approval of the Fire Marshal.
- b. Shared or multi-tenant buildings must ensure all tenants' relevant access points and internal doors required for emergency response are included in the Knox Box.

7. Update of Keys / Access Devices

- a. Whenever a building undergoes changes in its access system (new locks, new access panels, change in gates/doors), or a tenant change with keys/cards issued, the Knox Box must be updated promptly.
- b. The owner must notify the Fire District of any such changes, supply new keys/cards, and remove obsolete ones.

8. Recordkeeping and Contact Information

- a. The owner shall provide and maintain current primary and secondary contact information for access/emergency purposes.
- b. Records of all changes, maintenance, and inspections shall be kept for a minimum period of three (3) years and be made available to the Fire District upon request.

Scotts Valley Fire Protection SVFPD	
POLICY: 701	SUBJECT: Knox Box / Knox Keys

Appeals and Variances

Any owner who believes compliance with any provision is impractical or imposes undue hardship may apply in writing for a variance. The Fire Marshal shall review and may grant variances with conditions as appropriate, provided the essential safety function is not compromised. There is no appealing the Fire Marshal’s final decision or disposition on the appeal.

Miscellaneous

- The Fire District may, from time-to-time, update manufacturer or vendor specifications, brand approvals, or technical standards; the property owner must ensure the installed Knox Box meets the current approved specifications.
- The Fire District provides educational materials to owners / property managers regarding the Knox system, proper maintenance, and their obligations under this policy.