Key Control Checklist
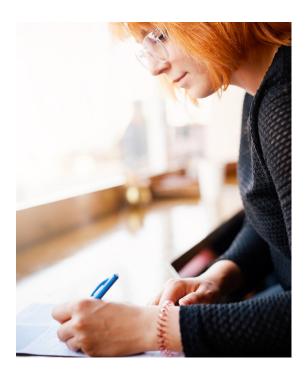
A California dealership settled a negligence lawsuit for almost $1 million after it failed to secure its keys and a thief driving a vehicle stolen from the dealership's lot caused a fatal accident.[1] A school district's entire collection of keys was stolen in Oregon, and the district had to spend $50,000 to rekey all 16 schools.[2] The brother of an apartment complex's maintenance man used his brother's master key to steal as much as $17,000 in jewelry from elderly tenants.[3]

Unfortunately, stories such as these are not uncommon. Many companies face costly losses of keys and assets before they begin to rethink their methods of asset management.

Before you think, "That could never happen to me," ask yourself the following question: **Would you give clients and employees unauthorized access to your entire facility, assets and files?** Your answer may be "no," but if you don't properly secure facility keys, you're effectively granting free reign over your facility to anyone who can access your keys.

To protect your business's property, confidential information and the lives of employees, tenants and others, it's vital that you select a proper method of storing keys. Fortunately, there are plenty of key control systems on the market that will accomplish this goal.

"But where do I start?" you may ask. The decision-making process can be overwhelming, which is why we've compiled the following guidelines.

Selecting a Key Control System

When selecting a key control system, there are two main things to bear in mind. The first thing, of course, is the system itself. A key control system is an investment, and you'll want to make sure it meets all your key control needs. The second thing is the company selling the system. A partnership with the company you're purchasing the system from is of utmost importance, because when you have questions about your investment, you need to be able to trust the company to provide you with the assistance you need. The following questions are designed to help you evaluate each of these two areas, so that you receive the best value for your dollar.

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System

Key Quantity and Software

☐ How many keys do you need to store?

☐ If expansion is a possibility, does the system come with expansion options (e.g., additional drawers, panels, capacity, etc.)?

☐ Does the company have a history of expanding the capabilities of the software? As businesses grow and technology advances, your system software should keep pace with these developments. Avoid purchasing a system with software that will be outdated within a few years.

☐ Does the company offer industry-specific software? One-size-fits-all software is not ideal, because every industry has different needs. For example, an automotive dealership may need to track vehicles on the lot; an apartment complex may need to track packages sent to residents; and a government facility may need to track everything from vehicles to work orders. It is important that system software cater to your needs.

Security

☐ For maximum security, a system should offer more than one method of user login (e.g., a fingerprint reader, fob, employee badge or password) that can be used in conjunction with one another. What security options does the system offer?

☐ Does the system come equipped with audible alarms and/or email notifications that are triggered when the system has been compromised?

Ease of Use

☐ Key control systems should be secure, but if accessing the system entails a cumbersome, complicated process, it will frustrate employees and discourage them from following protocol. Does the system include any features that make it more convenient to use without violating security measures (e.g., a fingerprint reader for user login or lighted key tags for easy location of keys)?

☐ If you have an existing facility management system, does the key control system have the capability to interface with the existing facility management system?

Reporting Capabilities

☐ What reports does the system offer? Reports detailing information such as key inventory, keys currently checked out and the names of the employees using keys provide management personnel with an easily viewable summary of company activity.

☐ If the system does not offer reports that include the data most useful to you, does it provide the option to create custom reports?

☐ How are reports created/accessed? Does the system allow you to automatically generate and email reports? Can you access the system remotely via the internet?

Employee Management

☐ Does the system allow you to manage employees in addition to keys?

☐ Does it provide the capability to be set up with different levels of access for each employee?

☐ Can you define specific time periods during which employees may log on to the system?

Company

Reputation

- ☐ How long has the company been in business?

- ☐ How many systems has it installed?

- ☐ Can the company provide references?

Sales

- ☐ Is the system sold by a third party or by a direct sales force?

- ☐ Will the company make a visit to your business to evaluate your facility and determine what key control system would best suit your needs?

- ☐ Does the company offer tours of its facilities?

Manufacturing/Installation

- ☐ Is the system manufactured in-house or by a third-party vendor?

- ☐ Does the company install and provide training on the software and hardware, or are you required to do it yourself?

Support

- ☐ Does the company provide in-house financing, support, training, etc? If not, what services does the company outsource to third-party vendors? What vendors?

- ☐ What training services, if any, does the company provide?

- ☐ Does the company conduct remote training or provide in-person training at your facility?

Remember, the purchase of a key control system is one of the best investments your company can make — especially considering that one lost or stolen key could potentially cost your business thousands of dollars in lost assets and rekeying costs. Don't leave your company vulnerable.

[1] "Fresno car dealer to pay $950,000 after stolen Infiniti was in fatal crash," Fresno Bee, 2016 ▪ http://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article80913722.html

[2] "Stolen master keys force Salem-Keizer schools to re-key," Statesman Journal, 2014 ▪ http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2014/10/10/salem-keizer-schools-forced-to-re-key-after-master-keys-get-stolen/17058521/

[3] "Theft victims confront man who stole jewelry from apartments," The Daily Nonpareil, 2017 ▪ http://www.nonpareilonline.com/news/local/theft-victims-confront-man-who-stole-jewelry-from-apartments/article_b9e74db8-0eb1-11e7-82db-fbeb1d520229.html

Electronic Key Control Scorecard

To help you find the right technology partner, compare up to three vendors using the ranking criteria below. For each item, enter a value of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent. The vendor with the highest total is likely to be the best fit.

Ranking Criteria	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Technology			
Key and asset capacity			
Expansion options (additional drawers/panels, departments, facilities, etc.)			
Software development			
Industry-specific software			
Ease of use			
Type and range of user login options (fingerprint reader, fob, etc.)			
Alarm and notification options			
User security settings			
Preset reports			
Custom reports			
Remote access			
Data backup			
Additional features			
Support and Training			
Installation services			
Warranty/maintenance agreement coverage			
Direct versus outsourced support			
Field support			
Phone support			
Chat			
Help documentation			
On-site training			
Video teleconferencing training sessions			
Other			
Company			
Longevity and reputation			
Understanding of my business and valuable insight provided			
Vision for future that aligns with our organization's			
Ability to grow with our organization			
Track record of product improvement over the last 3-5 years			
Ability to improve our customers' experience and/or give us a competitive advantage			
Buy-in from our team			
TOTALS			