

A+ Campus Key Control

by Marcey Tweedie

Old-school physical lock and key security hardware has provided access control solutions to university campuses for hundreds of years. Thousands of metal keys and locks exist on any given university campus, creating a need for expedient and efficient key control procedures. A well-defined key control policy that manages and protects assets is vital for any university facilities department to optimize security. The management of all keys on campus through detailed key control policies helps to reduce instances of theft, the number one crime on university campuses.



Over the past three decades, manual clipboard, log, and pegboard methods evolved to sophisticated electronic key control systems that provide more efficiency and accountability for key control security.

The old-school implementation of campus key control policy involved administrators manually recording every key removal and return on a log attached to a clipboard and then vending the appropriate keys from a pegboard and label system to authorized recipients. This “school of hard knocks” key control method often contributed to scads of lost keys, burglaries when lost keys ended up in the wrong hands, and financial headaches when the expense of re-keying and replacement of locks costs thousands of dollars.

Fortunately, over the past three decades, manual clipboard, log, and pegboard methods evolved to sophisticated electronic key control systems that provide more efficiency and accountability for key control security. Key control systems automate every key transaction so key control policy and procedures can be implemented and followed

through with accuracy. An electronic key control system tracks which keys are out, who has them, and when and where they are returned, reducing instances of lost and misplaced keys.

Universities undergo frequent changes that include the build-out of new dormitories or learning facilities, the razing of outdated or unused buildings, the constant flow of ever-changing populations on campus, and the purchase of new fleet vehicles; all of these circumstances require regular audits, updates, and changes to key control policy and procedures. When key control policy is not well-defined, security vulnerabilities emerge if protocol and procedures are not spelled out and communicated to university employees, contractors, faculty, and students.

Making the grade for a strong and well-defined campus key control policy involves

communicating the policy with the campus population and implementing the key control procedures with the investment of electronic key control. Maximizing procedures with “think like a criminal” creativity to deploy key control solutions protects more than just keys on campus. Usually the facilities, security, and lock shop departments administer key control policy which includes:

- appointing administrators responsible for managing keys
- determining who is eligible for key usage
- managing and securing master keys
- fabricating and managing new and duplicate keys

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Once the key control policy is defined and established, an electronic key control system provides accountability features to help mitigate the risk of lost or misplaced keys. These systems lead to reduction of incidents of theft, promoting a safer and more secure campus.

- assigning specific keys to specific users
- tracking key removals and returns
- defining access of keys for contractors
- implementing procedures for obtaining keys
- defining procedures for instances of lost keys
- determining and removing obsolete keys from the system

Once the key control policy is defined and established, an electronic key control system provides accountability features to help mitigate the risk of lost or misplaced keys. These systems lead to reduction of incidents of theft, promoting a safer and more secure campus. Some of the features and benefits available through electronic key control include:

Audit Reports

Audit reports can be generated on demand with an electronic key control system. Key control administrators can instantly see who accessed certain keys in actual time because every key transaction is recorded through the electronic key control software. Reports can also be programmed to be automatically emailed to any person at any time. More frequent key control audits can reveal to key control administrators’ areas where policy needs to be amended to strengthen and improve security.

Accountability

A special feature allows users to provide notes in the key control system about the usage and purpose of obtaining a key. This feature creates adherence to the key control policy directives so there is more likelihood that the keys are being used for the right reasons at the right times in the right areas by the right users. Also,

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While cybersecurity helps to deter the most determined hackers, anti-virus software is not enough to protect against campus data breaches. Protecting server rooms and equipment cages with electronic key control provides accountability for who has access to the server room and prevents the theft of computer hardware and all the data that resides on it.

when new personnel and student populations are ever-changing, an electronic key control provides the security needed while orientation about key control policy and procedures takes place.

Access to keys will only be given when authorized usage is granted with assigned credentials. Having user accountability for all the keys on campus means key control administrators will always know which keys are currently being used and by whom. Permissions can easily be changed as needed.

Access Control

Users are granted access to the electronic key control system only if the credentials are entered correctly or are recognized by the system. Users are required to enter a secure PIN code, use a fingerprint or card reader, or complete biometric facial recognition. Users can easily be added or removed when needed.

All users of the key control system—including employees, students, educators, and contractors—need access to different buildings and locations around campus for specific periods of time. A key control system allows key control administrators to customize and program the permissions to make each key available only to those individuals authorized to enter a specific building or area. Temporary contractors and visiting faculty may be granted restricted access for the days and times needed only; these parameters can be programmed into the electronic key control system. For highly sensitive areas on campus, dual or triple user authentication can be programmed requiring multiple users to sign a key out or back in, which prevents single users from giving sensitive keys to unauthorized persons. Electronic key control systems provide surprising security capabilities, leaving plenty of opportunities to get creative on campus, including the following:



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More Secure Computer Server Rooms

Data breaches that affect sensitive information on campus can create fallout that may incur hefty fines, potential lawsuits, and the headaches of software, firewall, and reputation recovery. Firewalls and antivirus software alone are often not enough to protect against data breaches. While cybersecurity helps to deter the most determined hackers, anti-virus software is not enough to protect against campus data breaches. Protecting server rooms and equipment cages with electronic key control provides accountability for who has access to the server room and prevents the theft of computer hardware and all the data that resides on it.

More Secure Fleets

Campus fleets include athletic team vehicles, scooters, golf carts, buses, campus security vehicles, cars, bicycles, crew team

shells, landscaping equipment, and more. Replacement of fleet vehicles is an expense that needs budgeting. An electronic key control system with fleet management software secures keys and optimizes and “right-sizes” fleets. Over-utilization and under-utilization of fleet vehicles leads to lost revenue. A two-in-one key and fleet management system prevents theft and assigns vehicles only to authorized individuals. The software keeps fleets on schedule with maintenance and rotates usage to lengthen the lifespan of each fleet vehicle. Key removals and returns are all recorded and tracked with instant reports available.

More Secure Weapons

Electronic key control systems have the capability to store small firearms, weapons, and ammunition used by campus police officers. Besides modules for keys, locker modules can be configured into the system

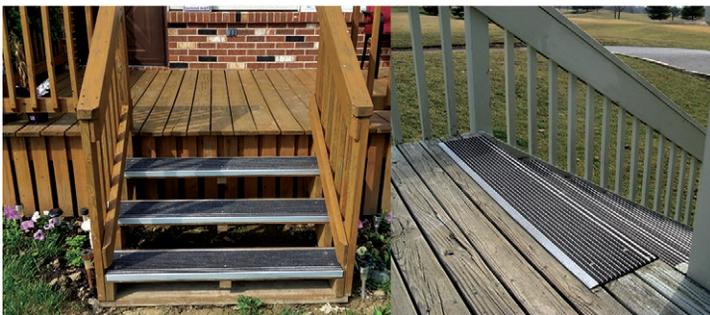


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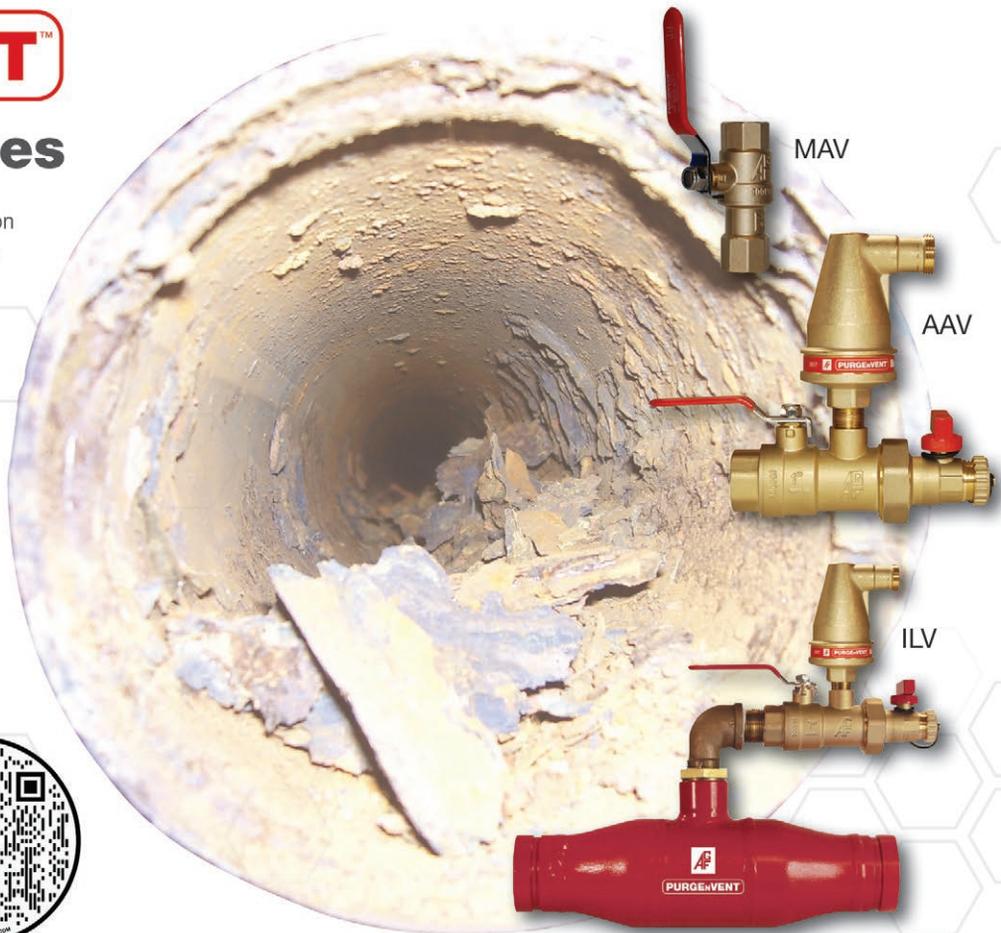
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to provide access control to only authorized users, so weapons do not end up in the wrong hands. The system is programmable to ensure that assets can be accessed only at specific times, such as during work shifts. A requirement for the key control policy for weapon removal can include leaving notes within the system providing information about who and when and why weapons are accessed, how many rounds of ammunition were taken, and for what reasons.

More Connectivity with Integrations

Electronic key control systems can be integrated with leading access control systems so administrators can get a bigger picture of actual time security. The inter-operability between the two systems allows merging related functions so parameters of key control policy can be established along with access control parameters. For instance, if a key is not returned on time, then the user is denied egress from the facility until the key

is returned. By integrating key control and access control, safety and security is bolstered, especially during emergencies or lockdowns, because the two systems communicate with each other.

More Security for Important Assets

Physical assets such as mobile phones, two-way security radios, laptops, wallets, tools, historical artifacts, car keys, weapons, utensils, jewelry, and passports can all be secured in storage lockers within an electronic key control and asset management system. Campus staff and faculty members are at risk of having personal possessions stolen as they arrive at work and move around lecture halls, laboratories, and work areas. Maintenance and science departments need to lock away expensive tools or sensitive equipment and manage who has access to them to prevent theft. Electronic key control and asset management provides peace of mind to department heads that there is security and

accountability for items which are expensive to replace.

By combining a solid key control policy and maximizing the procedures through electronic key control systems, university campuses can reap the benefits of a safer and more secure campus. Decision-makers should look around, get some ideas brewing, and get creative with electronic key control security solutions.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Marcey Tweedie, Marketing Specialist for Morse Watchmans, has been with Morse

Watchmans for six years and has over thirty-five years of marketing communications experience. A Connecticut native, she enjoys exploring obscure towns with fun downtowns, history and good restaurants, gatherings with her husband and two grown daughters, travel, the arts, crafting, long walks, kayaking and good reads.

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