

2012 Standardized Elevator Key FAQs

Q 1. What is the reasoning behind the standardized fire service key code?

A. When fire departments and other public agencies respond to emergencies the ability to quickly access the location of the emergency can be the deciding factor of a successful response. Elevators are increasingly being relied upon for emergency operations and their importance has been highlighted by recent additions to the International Building Code requiring the installation of fire service access elevators and providing requirements for the installation of occupant evacuation elevators.

Q 2. How does the standardized fire service key program improve emergency response effort?

A. The standardized fire service key allows emergency responders to take immediate control of elevators and eliminates any delays related to the availability of elevator keys or the uncertainty of their location.

Q 3. Has this new code language been adopted into both ICC/IFC and NFPA1 Fire Code?

A. Yes, the new code language is included in both ICC and NFPA1 Codes 2012 editions.

Q 4. Why does the code specify a “patented” and “factory restricted” Key?

A. The new code language calls for a Patented and Factory Restricted Key to protect the security of building owners and occupants. These security features limit the availability of keys to protect against unauthorized access.

Q 5. Does the code require controlled access to the keys and if so how is this done? Is authorization required to obtain these restricted keys? If so, what is the process?

A. Yes. The keys are required to be “factory restricted” which means keys can only be obtained through authorized suppliers, with proper identification for the copy to be made.

Q 6. How do jurisdictions and authorized parties get access to the keys?

A. Access is controlled by the AHJ responsible for enforcement of the relative code.

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Q 7. Does the standard FEO-K1 key, identified in ASME 17.1, comply with the new code requirements?

A. No, the standard FEO-K1 does not meet the new code requirements. The FEO-K1 key is not secure and as a result is readily available for sale to anyone over the internet. The FEO-K1 key itself is not “standard” in that there are two versions in the market and installations due to cutting the “bitting”, or key code, in clockwise and counter clockwise directions.

Q 8. Our AHJ/State has a standard key based upon a Yale key blank, does this key meet the new code requirements?

A. No. The Yale key is not secure and as a result is readily available for sale to anyone over the internet. The new code language calls for a Patented and Factory Restricted Key to protect the security of building owners and occupants. These security features limit the availability of keys to protect against unauthorized access.

Q 9. Who is authorized under the new codes to have access to standardized fire service keys?

A. Under the new codes, access to keys is limited to; elevator owners and their agents, elevator contractors, elevator inspectors, fire code officials of the jurisdiction, and the fire department and other emergency agencies as designated by the fire code official.

Q 10. Which states / jurisdictions have adopted the new standardized fire service key code or have implemented a similar standard?

A. Florida and Louisiana have adopted similar programs. Virginia has included the new elevator code language in their 2009 Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

Q 11. Does the program support mutual assistance?

A. Yes, code officials can specify that standardized fire service keys be common to a specific region or an entire State. In most cases the easiest way for this to occur is to have a State level code administration agency designate the key code as they move to the 2012 versions of the adopted codes.

Q 12. Does the new standardized fire service key code apply to existing buildings as well as new construction?

A. Yes, the intent of the code is to achieve consistency across all buildings within a jurisdiction and eliminate delays in the response process.

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Q 13. Will one states or jurisdictions key work in another state or jurisdiction?

A. The new key requirement is effective on a jurisdictional basis, but works best if the key designation occurs on a State or Regional basis to provide for broader compatibility of keys.

Q 14. Does the new code require only the new standardized fire service key or is there another way to comply with the codes?

A. In cases where there is a practical difficulty in an existing building, (which equates to the inability to fit the replacement key cylinder in the existing elevator panel), an AHJ approved key box may be used to secure the existing non-standardized key on site.

Q 15. Can an elevator key box be used instead of changing the effected locks?

A. Yes. See previous question.

Q 16. Is a standard elevator key box acceptable?

A. No. Only key boxes meeting the requirements of the adopted fire code and approved by the AHJ may be used.

Q 17. Can the key used to open a rapid entry key box (Knox Box) be used to open an elevator key box?

A. The key used for the Rapid Entry Box (Knox Box) can be used for the elevator key box if authorized by the jurisdiction and the elevator key box lock is compatible.

Q 18. For new construction will elevator manufacturers automatically supply the elevator in compliance with the new codes?

A. To be in compliance with the code the elevator manufacturers should supply all new elevators, including the fire service key devices, that comply with the codes.

Q 19. What emergency operation equipment/locks are the keys required to operate?

A. Phase I emergency recall and Phase II emergency in-car operation control switches.