Automated Key Control And Management Systems Boost Electronic Access Control

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An automated key control system bridges the gap between mechanical and electronic access control systems.

The vast array of doors, entrances and restricted areas securing semi-public locales are increasingly demanding the need for effective and easy access control management. In this article, Fernando Pires, VP Sales and Marketing at Morse Watchmans, highlights the effectiveness and convenience offered by automated key control systems that have narrowed the gap between mechanical and electronic access control systems.

The increasing use of access control systems in semi-public venues such as university campuses and large hotel properties present unique challenges in security management. Industry specialists and consultants advise choosing and implementing physical security counter-measures in order to aid their management. Key control and asset management systems are an effective and increasingly important physical security technology to help achieve this goal. In fact, an essential element of a risk management strategy is having an orderly and secure system for the management of keys. Regardless of the size or type of facility, managed key control is capable of providing...
custom solutions, minimizing and monitoring risk and seamless integration with the building's global physical security system.

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An automated key control system bridges the gap between mechanical and electronic access control systems, both literally and figuratively. It is designed to store mechanical and plastic card type keys in a smart cabinet or key bank and to record all transactions. Keys can only be released to pre-authorized users presenting viable identification such as an approved user code, an access identification card or a pre-registered biometric fingerprint. Sophisticated key management also allows for a wide range of options for developing custom solutions, including the flexibility to have different levels of security in different areas of the building.

**Benefits of network-enabled key management systems**

Outdated manual logs or color coded tags that can be easily torn or lost have been replaced by key management systems that are themselves fully integrated access control systems. These automated systems can communicate across the converged network and provide management with a wealth of information that can be used to manage and improve security on the property. For instance, when a network-enabled key management system is integrated with a university's access control system, individuals can be denied entry from an area if a key they accessed to enter a restricted area has not been returned. Or, priority email alerts can be sent to security managers to inform them of the whereabouts of specific keys.

**Increased safety and convenience with key management systems**

In network-enabled key control systems, authorisation codes can be changed instantly to help
prevent incidents such as allowing access to a recently terminated employee. The network connectivity of the system allows management to remotely release any key, adding to the convenience and inherent safety provided by a key control and management solution. Imagine the convenience for a hotel manager to be able to remotely release a key to an employee who has been called in on the weekend to cover for another employee who called in sick. Finally, when products are engineered for interactivity with other security systems, best-of-breed solutions can be implemented without costly upgrades or overhauls.

Plastic key cards are commonly used and need to be secured in the same manner as mechanical keys

Based on the inherent benefits of a key control and management system, the concept to include other items to which access needs to be controlled and tracked is growing. For example, radios, cell phones, hand-held computers and so on are both expensive and represent potential security breaches if stolen or misplaced. To secure these items, locker modules can be added to a key control system complete with an audit trail to record when an item is removed and by whom. Because a mechanical lock that is used for securing a cabinet full of expensive electronics cannot be queried, the ability to audit who accessed the cabinet’s key and when can be a theft deterrent in itself as well as form an investigative tool.

In another growing trend, plastic key cards are common in usage in both university and hotel
environments and need to be secured in the same manner as mechanical keys. Specifically designed modules that can accommodate magnetic cards or proximity devices can be configured into a key control system in any combination with standard key or locker modules. The combination of modules is entirely up to the user, giving them the ability to customize and change the system to meet their specific needs.

In today's environment of extreme liability and accountability, key control systems provide secure and reliable access control. Either in stand-alone or integrated configurations, they add the extra layer of protection needed to help ensure a safe and guarded facility.

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