

Background

In 1975, the KNOX Company developed North America's first lock box, designed specifically for firefighters to gain access to a location using a secure key and thus bypassing purposeful damage and increased access times when entry in an emergency was required. Today KNOX products are utilized by over 14,000 fire departments across North America. Greater Sudbury Fire Services (GSFS) has for the past decade used the KNOX Rapid Access System to obtain entry into participating buildings when firefighters respond to emergencies. This System uses a specific KNOX-BOX located on the outside of a building to store keys which facilitate quick, non-damaging access to locked areas within that building. KeySecure control units are installed in front line fire apparatus to hold and secure the master key, which unlocks the KNOX-BOX. Only authorized GSFS users, such as Captains and Senior Officers, have access to these master keys.

System Update

Over the course of 2018, GSFS completed an update of the approximate 125 KNOX-BOXES installed across Greater Sudbury. This was done to ensure security, public safety and to enhance the available technology of the updated system. Some of the updated features included:

- new KNOX master keys, specific to Greater Sudbury Fire Services,
- new KeySecure devices in responding fire trucks,
- enhanced online tracking of all master keys,
- new System lock cores for a building KNOX-BOX,
- secure online ordering and support of all KNOX products, and
- simple sign-up process for new participants joining the program.

There are six front line fire apparatus located in the City of Greater Sudbury core and one in Val Therese with the KNOX KeySecure devices installed. These geographic areas represent the majority of the installations of the current KNOX-BOX systems. There are currently two additional installs in progress, which will place KeySecure devices into front line fire apparatus located in the Waters and Garson stations. This will expand the coverage area of the KNOX program to the west and east sides of the Municipality.

As part of the upgrading process, GSFS suppression staff attended all 125 KNOX equipped buildings to open the current KNOX-BOX and verified the keys located in each box. Firefighters replaced the KNOX-BOX lock core with a new KNOX security core, which is unique to Greater Sudbury.

Joining the Program

Any residential, commercial or industrial building owners or property managers located in Greater Sudbury who wish an option for non-damaging access to their property may purchase a KNOX-BOX or related KNOX security product directly from the KNOX Company via their online website www.knox-box.com. The website outlines the GSFS approved options available to building owners or property managers based on their geographical location. Once building owners or property managers install the product on their building, GSFS is automatically contacted by KNOX to conduct a site visit. Outside of the approximate \$350 cost of a basic KNOX-BOX, there are no annual fees, maintenance charges or other costs to building owners to participate in the program.

Pre-Incident Plan

For additional safety, firefighters prepared a pre-incident plan and performed a life-safety walk through of each building. Pre-incident plans include relevant information including fire hydrant location, building height, construction type, fire alarm system, roof access, property manager contact number and other critical building

information. This information is all uploaded to the Mobile Data Terminals for firefighters to access quickly when responding to a future incident or fire emergency.

Conclusion

With the assistance of building owners and property managers, the upgrade process for the KNOX Rapid Access System will enhance emergency fire response for buildings across Greater Sudbury. All buildings (residential, commercial, or industrial) in Greater Sudbury are eligible to participate in the KNOX program. More information is available on the City of Greater Sudbury Fire Services website or through www.knox-box.com.

The use of a KNOX-BOX is a proven and trusted method of securing keys, which Fire Services may access in order to enter a building or property without causing needless damage. It also reduces the amount of time firefighters require to enter a building in an emergency which can lead to a better overall fire response.