

Key systems still matter

By Ann Geissler Timme, Allegion

With the rise in popularity of access control systems that use electronic credentials to control access, the trend in facility security has been to standardize the overall effort into one integrated system. Mechanical lock and keys are being forgotten in favor of card readers and biometrics.

Such a system is indeed valuable, worthwhile, and can limit the logistical and security risk many healthcare facilities face. But is such a system necessary for all aspects of building and asset security? Do the mechanical lock and key still have a place in building security?

Even the most modern corporate buildings, healthcare facilities, universities, and public school systems should use a hybrid strategy that will include, among other things, key systems.

Are all levels of security the same?

Most healthcare facilities have prioritized their levels of security through Security Management Plans or Hazard Vulnerability Assessments and use these priorities when addressing their security needs. Typically, judgment calls are made which could imply that, for example, the level of protection needed to access security sensitive areas such as the pharmacy is greater than that of a cleaning supplies closet. In these situations, the use of keys alone is a practical solution that still provides a sensible level of security.

The key may have the last word

Even when healthcare facilities have chosen to adopt access control systems; many of the electronically controlled openings on the system still have a key override. Therefore, after all the investment and implementation, the weakest link in your security plan could be a technology you started with, your key system. With this in mind, it is important that with any security system to start with a secure and managed key system.

Not your typical house key

Even the design and implementation of mechanical keys has made advancements. With the use of a patented key system, facilities can better protect against duplication. What makes the system effective is that key blanks may only be acquired from the manufacturer. And since the designs are patented, any attempts to duplicate the design without permission are subject to prosecution under federal law.

Managing potentially thousands of keys, even if they are patented, is also no easy task. Today, key management systems allow administrators to create advanced audit trails for keys from creation to current status to end of life, and help to manage assets, personnel, and door hardware schedules.

Does your security system fit your need?

In the end, the question those responsible for the security of the facility need to ask is not whether their facility has the perfect security system but whether their security program and system is perfect for their facility. Have the risks been appropriately assessed and addressed?

And when the security questions are answered, those responsible often find that properly protecting their assets still involves one important piece of equipment, the key.

As the leader in all levels of key systems, – from open to patented – locks, and key management systems, Allegion can help you plan and implement the right solution for your facility.

Learn more about key systems

For more information about key systems, please visit us.allegion.com/products/keysystems. To reach a professional security consultant in your area, please contact us at **888.758.9823** or fill out the **Contact Us** form on our website at allegion.com.

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