

Are your
master keys
mastering you?

Are your
smart locks
outsmarting you?

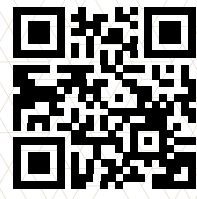


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Don't Sacrifice Security for Convenience

By Carl Hanly, CAS, KeyTrak

Convenience is king. You can purchase groceries online and have them loaded into your trunk, order food from an app and have it delivered to your doorstep, and choose from hundreds of movies or TV shows to stream on demand. These things, once considered luxuries, are now a normal way of life.

In fact, a survey by YouGov America revealed that convenience has become to U.S. consumers that nearly a third prioritize functionality over security when choosing a mobile app. Does that sound strange? What if I told you that many multifamily communities are also choosing convenience over security with the way they manage door access? There are two major culprits: master keys and smart locks.

Are you master keys mastering you?

Multifamily communities have been using master keys for as long as most of us have been alive. It's easy to understand why. One of the main benefits of master lock systems is users don't have to carry as many keys. In one sense, employees save time by not having to juggle multiple keys.

But efficiency isn't the only factor to consider. If someone forgets to update your key log, how do you know exactly who has checked out keys, when, and why? If a key goes missing, how much time (and money) will you waste searching for that key and rekeying locks? More important, what -- or who -- will be at risk?

Are your smart locks outsmarting you?

Smart locks seem like a win-win solution for both residents and on-site staff. Residents can easily unlock their doors with codes, fobs, or their smartphones. Property managers can reduce liability by tracking which employees have accessed each apartment and when. They can even offer self-guided tours to prospects.

The issue is when there's a power outage, software glitch, or security breach. Some systems offer the option to use traditional metal keys as backups in these situations. However, if the property doesn't secure these physical keys, that's a liability risk.

Even if the system is 100 percent keyless, many come with security tokens such as key fobs or cards. Programming these tokens is time-consuming, which has led some apartment communities to program master versions. This practice is no different from using master keys. Just as you shouldn't leave metal keys laying around in an easily accessible location, you don't want to leave preprogrammed fobs or cards unsecured.

Balance Is Key

The one thing master keys and electronic locks have in common is both are convenient for their users, but security suffers. This places more risk on apartment investors, property owners, and management companies. On the other hand, if the property keys are locked down like Fort Know, there's little convenience, and productivity decreases.

The solution is to balance security and convenience. Electronic key control systems provide that balance. All master keys, backup keys, and fobs or access cards can be secured inside a metal drawer only authorized users can access. The system automatically records when a key is removed, which eliminates the hassle of filling out a manual access log and reduces the likelihood of human error.

Like any technology, key control systems can be simple or complicated as you make them. The secret to maximizing security without affecting user friendliness is to ensure the system is installed correctly, set up features and reports appropriate for your business, and train your employees on how to use the system. The right technology partner will walk you through all these steps.

Don't sacrifice security for simplicity. To improve your key security, visit keytrak.com.