HOW SMART ARE SMART LOCKS?

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With the growing popularity of the Internet of Things — everyday objects that are connected to the internet — smart locks are rapidly joining multifamily communities' list of amenities.

Smart locks can be useful, especially if your property is offering self-led tours to encourage social distancing. Smart locks increase security and convenience in many ways, but are they as smart as they seem? Whether you've already implemented electronic locks at your property or plan to in the future, follow the best practices below to get the most out of your investment.

Plan for the Additional Workload

Part of the appeal of keyless entry systems is the ability to easily access apartments for maintenance requests, assist residents who have been locked out, and grant prospects the ability to tour unoccupied units. The challenge is finding an effective process for reprogramming fobs, cards, and other security tokens whenever a resident moves out, locks themselves out of their home, or loses their security token.

If your staff is already stretched thin due to the additional demands of working from home, accommodating requirements for COVID-19, and preparing to reopen, the task of managing security tokens becomes even more cumbersome. In fact, under normal circumstances, programming security tokens can become almost a full-time job, especially for larger properties.

To keep smart locks from becoming a burden rather than a benefit, it's essential that you decide how you'll manage the additional workload.

Don't Forget About Your Key Control Policy

In many cases, keyless entry can be a bit of a misnomer. While it's true that smart locks don't require you to use a traditional metal key, some do use security tokens, which function like keys. Others include a manual key override feature, which allows you to unlock a door using a traditional metal key.

Also consider the fact that unless you install the locks on every single door on your property — including common areas, closets, offices, storage sheds, etc. — you'll still have traditional keys to manage.

To protect your community, it's important to have a written policy detailing your key control procedures, including who's authorized to program or use keys, how to track key usage, the protocol for rekeying locks, etc.

Manage Security Tokens Properly

Does your smart lock system require you to use a physical access token such as a fob or card to unlock a door? If so, be sure to take the same precautions to secure those tokens as you would with metal keys. Without the right processes in place, managing these tokens becomes an administrative and security nightmare.

For example, staff at one 348-unit community — we'll call it Smart Apartments — was spending so much time programming key fobs for their smart lock system that they decided to program fobs to open all apartments. In effect, they were using master keys for everyday tasks like performing maintenance tasks and showing apartments. To track access to each apartment, management would check the electronic lock logs. However, the problem with this method is that the log didn't show who used the fob to access any given unit.

If you're in the same boat, does that mean smart locks are a bad move? Not necessarily. Smart Apartments found a solution that allowed them to save time while reaping the benefits of the smart lock system. Rather than programming every fob to access every unit, they preprogrammed one fob per unit. They then secured these fobs in an electronic key control system. That way, the electronic key control system would show who removed each fob and when, and the smart lock system would show when someone accessed a specific apartment. If a fob wasn't returned on time, the electronic key control system would notify a manager. Not only did this method save time, it improved security and employee accountability.

To manage security tokens effectively, think through how you'll address each of the following areas:

• Where will you store them?

• How will you track who has used each token?

• How will you promptly detect when a token hasn't been returned?

By avoiding not-so-smart security mistakes when implementing smart locks, you'll improve the resident experience, save time, and get the most from your investment.

Does your key management get a **passing grade**?

Make sure your key control practices are protecting your property and residents. Take our quiz at **keytrak.com/quiz** or call **800.720.0471.**

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