



Use of Key Boxes by First Responders to Obtain Access to a Pharmacy

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It has come to the Board of Pharmacy's (Board) attention that some fire departments around the state are utilizing "key boxes," commonly referred to as a "knox box," on structures that are occupied by Ohio-licensed pharmacies. The key boxes have been placed at these locations to give immediate access to the pharmacy when it is necessary for use in emergency situations.

The Board would like to clarify that, in certain situations, the use of key boxes conflicts with Ohio laws and rules governing the supervision and control of dangerous drugs in a pharmacy.

Please be advised that if your pharmacy does not secure dangerous drugs in its possession in a physical space or cabinet that can be accessed only by a pharmacist, and you are utilizing the key box system, you must immediately discontinue the use of a key box system. The pharmacy key must be removed from the key box and returned to the pharmacy's responsible person. This includes pharmacies that do not have a physical space or barrier separating drug stock from store front (i.e. "open air").

If your pharmacy has dangerous drugs secured with a barrier and lock system separately, and the drug stock cannot be accessed by anyone entering the pharmacy via the key box, then use of a key box is permitted.

The following are the relevant Revised and Administrative codes:

ORC 4729.27- Pharmacist must be in full and actual charge of pharmacy.

...any pharmacist who owns, manages, or conducts a pharmacy shall be personally in full and actual charge of the pharmacy, or shall employ another pharmacist to be in full and actual charge of the pharmacy.

ORC 4729.55- Terminal distributor license requirements.

(B) A pharmacist...will maintain supervision and control over the possession and custody of dangerous drugs...

(C) Adequate safeguards are assured to prevent the sale or other distribution of dangerous drugs by any person other than a pharmacist...

OAC 4729-9-05- Security Requirements.



(A) All licensees and registrants shall provide effective and approved controls and procedures to deter and detect theft and diversion of dangerous drugs. In order to determine whether a licensee or registrant has provided effective and approved controls against diversion, the state board of pharmacy shall use the security requirements set forth in rule 4729-9-11 of the Administrative Code as standards for the security controls and operating procedures necessary to deter and detect diversion.

OAC 4729-9-11- Security and control of dangerous drugs.

A pharmacist, prescriber, and responsible person pursuant to rule [4729-5-11](#) of the Administrative Code shall provide supervision and control of dangerous drugs as required in division (B) of section [4729.55](#) of the Revised Code, and adequate safeguards to ensure that dangerous drugs are being distributed in accordance with all state and federal laws as required in section [4729.55](#) of the Revised Code, by the following procedures:

(A) In a pharmacy:

...

(2) Whenever personal supervision of the dangerous drugs is not provided by a pharmacist, physical or electronic security of the dangerous drugs must be provided according to the following requirements:

(a) The prescription department or stock of dangerous drugs must be secured by either a physical barrier with suitable locks and/or an electronic barrier to detect entry at a time the pharmacist is not present. Such a barrier, before being put into use, must be approved by the state board of pharmacy.

...

(d) Except as provided in rule [4729-17-03](#) of the Administrative Code, only a pharmacist may have access to the prescription department or stock of dangerous drugs or assume responsibility for the security of dangerous drugs, exempt narcotics ... and any other item or product that requires the personal supervision or sale by a pharmacist.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy by visiting: www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/contact.