Automating Your Locks

by Tim Seyfarth, Global Electronics

It has long been the goal of many self-storage operators to reduce their labor expense while increasing the hours they can service new and existing customers by renting units, taking payments and removing overlocks instantaneously and automatically. A typical site can have as many as 10-15 percent of their tenants past due and in overlock status. On a property with 500 units, this translates to 50-75 units that have an overlock installed!

This means the manager has to spend a lot of time managing the overlock process.

Digital electronic individual door locks provide not only increased security, but also the *ability to immediately remove an overlock from a delinquent tenant's unit once he has made his payment.*

Tenants will appreciate the fact that they do not have to wait for the manager to go on-site to remove one or more overlocks following a payment– allowing immediate access to their unit and freeing the manager to service the next customer.
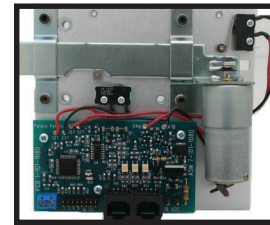
Integrated tightly with management system, kiosks and security systems, the electronic lock follows the rules set forth by the management software. The electronic lock operates similarly to the gate, wherein it unlocks when tenants enter their valid PIN at the gate while staying locked in the event that either the tenant has tailgated into the facility or has been locked out due to a past due account.

Security Features

Electronic locks provide several security and failsafe features. They include extensive lightning protection, are designed to be installed easily using pre-made computer cables and have a great deal of intelligence designed in. For example, without overriding, the lock cannot engage when the door is open or if the magnetic door switch that indicates that the door is open has failed.

However, the intelligent software can override this (when programmed by the user in advance as part of set-up), locking the unit even if the magnetic door switch is broken or missing. Further, the software that controls these locks can e-mail (or fax) the tenant, the manager or any one of the owner's designees automatically depending on the options chosen during set up. The locking system also features true closed-loop communication. This feature provides acknowledgment codes at both the remote device end and the PC end, eliminating data loss and increasing the system's robustness.

Not a Replacement

Electronic locks are not a replacement for cylinder or disk locks. The practice of "your lock, your key" remains intact. Installed inside the unit on the opposing side of the door from the latch, the lock mounts to the drum bracket and prevents the drum from rotating, keeping the door closed. Maintenance is low since the lock is designed with appropriate materials to eliminate the need for lubricant.

In practice, your tenants will find it hard to see the electronic lock, but both you and they will enjoy the additional benefits they bring!

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TMSA Computer Security Software Vendors

Editor's Note:
The vendors listed here all offer security software. However, several of them also offer management software. For a complete list of computer management software vendors, please see the May/June *Texas Mini News* or visit www.tmsaonline.org and click on the Buyer's Guide.