

A Centralized Approach to Maintenance – Without Smart Locks

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The multifamily industry has struggled with high turnover for years. According to CEL & Associates, on-site maintenance positions reached a record-high of 39% in 2019. To mitigate the impact of staffing issues management companies are turning to centralized maintenance operations.

In a Multifamily Insiders survey, 59% of respondents said their properties use floating positions for various functions, including maintenance. These versatile technicians handle tasks across multiple properties. Allowing, on-site teams to focus on resident work orders.

For a centralized maintenance model to be successful, technicians need an efficient way to access apartments. While smart locks are often the go-to solution for properties with centralized maintenance, not all communities have adopted these locks, nor do they plan to. If your properties use traditional locks, a centralization is still doable and effective. Here's how.

Implementing the Right Infrastructure

Technology is the linchpin of a well-functioning centralized maintenance model. Technicians must be able to quickly retrieve keys and identify the apartments they unlock. Additionally, maintaining an accurate record of who used which key, when, and why, is essential for gaining insights into property activities and reducing liability.

One effective solution is implementing an electronic key control system at each property. To expedite the key checkout process and ensure precise key logs. Ideally, these systems should be networked, allowing management to run consolidated reports from multiple properties. For quick key identification, each key tag can be labeled with a QR code corresponding to the unit number. Technicians can simply scan the QR code using the key control system's mobile app.

Streamlining Key Control Processes

Once the appropriate infrastructure is in place, a well-structured key control process would look something like this:

1. Manager Assigns Keys to Technicians

The manager responsible for dispatching technicians can reserve the keys each technician will need at each site ahead of time. With the system's remote access capabilities and mobile app the manager can easily add keys to each technician's queue.

2. Technicians Retrieve Keys and Complete Work

Upon arriving at the property, technicians can access the key control system, log in, and check out all the keys assigned to them. A system featuring lighted key tags, indicating key locations within the system, streamlines the process.

When returning keys, technicians can place them in any available slot in the system or use the mobile app to transfer keys to another technician or on-site staff member.

3. Management Monitors Key Activity Across Multiple Properties

By networking key control systems, management can gain access to reports displaying key activity across all managed properties. These reports could include:

- Total keys checked out across all locations
- Key activity for each technician
- Overdue keys

Automated text or email alerts can be set up to notify management if a technician fails to return a key on time. If residents raise concerns about unauthorized access to their apartments, management can quickly generate reports detailing who, if anyone, had access to the resident's home during the relevant time frame.

Key control doesn't need to hinder the success of a centralized maintenance model. By implementing the right technology and processes, you can reduce the impact of high employee turnover.

About the Author:

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