

**City of Vista Fire Department**  
Prevention Bureau  
200 Civic Center Drive, Vista CA 92084

Guideline:  
Access Gates



Date: May 2012

The intent of this guideline is to provide the information necessary to ensure that the design and installation of gates and barriers comply with the applicable provisions of the 2010 California Fire Code Section 503, CCR Title 19 Div. 1 §3.05(a), and Vista Fire Protection District Ordinance No. 2010-22, which in part prohibits any obstruction of the fire access roadways.

## **Manual (non-automatic) Gates and Barriers**

All barriers placed across fire access roadways are determined to be obstructions and are therefore prohibited unless specifically approved by the Fire Department. Manual gates are subject to the same opening width and plan approval process as for automatic gates (see below).

Manual gates shall be provided with an approved method for emergency access. Approved methods shall consist of one of the following:

- High security padlock (Knox brand) keyed to VFD emergency access keyway, or
- Installation of a Knox rapid access key box containing the gate key.

Note: Chain gates, cable gates, and temporary bollards are not approved methods to gate a fire access roadway.

## **Automatic Gates**

### **Emergency Overrides:**

All automatic access gates across fire access roadways shall be equipped with an emergency agency approved Knox key switch which overrides all commands and allows passage through the gate. Separate key switches are required for Fire Department and Sheriff Department access. Application and approval to purchase the switches must be obtained from both agencies. Fire Department application and approval is provided through the Vista Fire Prevention Bureau 760-643-2801. San Diego Sheriff's Office (SDSO) application and approval is provided through the Vista Patrol Station 760-940-4551.

In addition, gates accessing more than four residences or residential lots, or gates accessing hazardous, institutional, educational, multi-family or assembly occupancy group structures, shall be automatic and shall be equipped with approved automatic traffic control-activating strobe light sensors capable of detecting emergency vehicle pulsing strobe lights from any direction of vehicle approach (interior and exterior), overriding all commands and opening the gate(s).

When approved by the Fire Chief, other devices, which detect the approach of emergency vehicles, may be acceptable substitutes for strobe light detectors.

Automatic gates serving more than one dwelling or residential lot in existence at the time of adoption of this Ordinance are required to install an approved emergency key-operated switch, or other mechanism approved by the Chief, at an approved location, which overrides all command functions and opens the gate(s). Property owners must comply with this requirement within 90 days of written notice to comply.

Where this section requires an approved key-operated switch, dual switches shall be provided to facilitate access by law enforcement personnel, unless the gate serves only one single-family residence.

### **Plan Check Requirements:**

All gate installations must undergo a fire department plan review and approval prior to initiating the work.

Plan submittal for **Multi-Family, Residential Developments and Commercial Occupancies** shall include the following:

Site plan to scale (use engineering scale) showing:

- Roadway width
- Roadway in immediate vicinity [50' either side of gate]
- Curb detail
- Related planters, islands, etc.
- Gate location
- Clear width opening at gate
- Gate swing [pathway]
- Support posts
- Entry panel location
- Motor/control location
- Strobe detector location(s)
- Key switch location(s)
- Location(s) NO PARKING FIRE LANE signs

Detail [elevations]

- Entry panel detail including key location
- Gate panel detail
- ... any other information related to the project that might affect fire apparatus access or obstruct the fire access roadway

Submittal sheets:

- Site address
- Owner – name and phone number
- Assessor parcel number
- Contractor – name, address and license number
- Cut sheets for product

Plan submittals for an individual **Single-Family Dwelling** shall provide the following

information:

- Site plan – need not be to scale – dimensions may be written on the plan
- Location of gate and distance to serving roadway (set-back)
- Clear width opening of the gate
- The method of gate operation
- The location of the control panel, if provided
- A description of the gate design

**Gate Width Requirements:**

Entry and exit gates shall have a clear opening of not less than twenty-four (24) feet of unobstructed clearance for a dual traffic direction gate, and not less than twelve (12) feet for each side of a divided roadway.

*Exception: Private residential driveways serving no more than two dwellings or dwelling lots may provide a clear width opening of sixteen (16) feet.*

**Exit Loop Detectors:**

Exit gates shall activate (open) by vehicle detector loops in the roadway and shall be independent of any other device. If exit loops are not proposed then an interior key switch shall be required and strobe detectors, if provided for entry, shall be provided for exiting as well.

**Key Switch Function and Location:**

An approved (Knox) key operated switch shall be installed at the entry control panel for fire department, emergency medical and law enforcement use. Activation of the switch shall over-ride all functions and open the gate(s). Panel location must be approved by the fire department. Exit gates shall also be provided with a key operated switch on the interior.

**Function During Power Failure:**

Gates shall automatically open using battery power in case of power failure, or by other means as approved by the fire department for disconnecting locks and opening the gate.

**Maintenance Program:**

In multi-family occupancies and residential developments a maintenance program shall be developed and maintained by the owner to insure the highest degree of system operation. A written maintenance program shall be submitted to the Fire Marshal for approval, and shall include preventative maintenance service intervals. Written verification of service shall be provided to the fire department and copies shall be maintained by the owner.

**Gates secured open until approval:**

Gates shall be installed and fully functional, and be accepted by the Vista Fire Department prior to the gate being left in the closed position. Gates shall remain locked in the open position until final approved by VFD. Defective gates shall be secured in the open position until repaired.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

In addition to Fire Department approval, gate plans must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate City or County departments *prior to installation*. *Provide proof of such approval at time of plan submittal*. In addition a permit from the County/City Building Department may be required.

City of Vista:

Planning Department  
Traffic Engineer

County of San Diego:

Department of Planning & Land Use  
Department of Public Works