



The art of choosing the right lock for a safe

The lock is a small but crucial detail when it comes to safes. The wrong lock can give rise to serious technical and legal problems. Essentially the lock must be approved for the safe in question, but it is also important to think carefully about how the safe will be used.

There is a Nordic and European standard for regular door locks, but when it comes to locks for safes there is a verita-

ble jungle of measures and standards. And far from all locks are suitable for all safes.

The most basic safes on the market come fitted with a lock which can usually not be changed. With higher quality safes, however, there are generally various approved locks for each safe. The list of approved locks forms part of the safe's certification documentation.

The safe is tested and approved in accordance with one of the current EN

standards. The standards are revised every five years by the TC 263 standardisation committee. The class of safe describes its resistance to external forces, such as a certain size of cutting wheel, a gas flame for a set number of minutes and a fall from a particular height.

A LOCK FOR A SAFE is tested at least twice, by two different laboratories and to at least two different standards: the special

norm for locks, EN 1300, and the standard for the safe onto which the lock will be fitted. For a lock to be approved for mounting to a safe, the lock construction has to be adapted to the safe's mounting and boltwork construction.

"The list of approved locks forms part of the safe's certification documentation. Fitting a lock that is not approved for the safe in question is a breach of certification, and the certificate is rendered invalid," says Myriam Bevilion, Product Line Manager for safes at Gunnebo.

Anyone fitting a lock not approved for a particular safe is taking a big risk, both technically and legally.

"Technically it could either mean that the lock is blocked, or that unauthorised access is easy. The legal consequence of breaching the safe's certification is that the insurance company will not cover the items stolen from the safe," says Pieter de Vlaam, Certification Manager at Gunnebo's Competence Centre Secure Storage, and a member of the TC 263 standardisation committee.

MOST SAFES ARE certified for ten or so different locks, both mechanical and electronic. Mats Rydén, Product Manager for electronic locks at Gunnebo, estimates that approximately a quarter of existing safes in Europe are fitted with at least one electronic lock. But just over half of all safes delivered around Europe today are fitted with at least one electronic lock, and a growing number of owners of older safes are choosing to replace or supplement their older mechanical locks with electronic ones.

"In extremely tough environments with very low temperatures, moisture, sand or dust, mechanical locks may still be preferable to electronic locks. The drawback is that lost or stolen keys are a problem. An electronic lock can quickly be reprogrammed if the code goes astray or if the owner no longer wants a particular person to access the safe," says Mats Rydén.

ELECTRONIC LOCKS were introduced on the market around 15 years ago, and

they have gradually been developed and refined. Today there is everything from simple, energy-efficient locks with a handful of codes to sophisticated locks for several users with more functions.

The code which forms the basis for all electronic locks can be combined with fingerprint scanning or an electronic chip. Some locks also have an audit memory for registering and logging different events.

"The most advanced locks can connect more than 50 different users who have access to the safe at different times of the day and with different conditions. Chain stores and companies with offices in several locations may benefit from a lock that can be managed remotely via IP. Some locks make it possible to allow CIT personnel, for example, to access the safe using one-time codes," says Mats Rydén.

HOWEVER, THE MOST advanced lock is not necessarily always the best. The art is to choose a lock that suits the environment and the safe's area of use.

"The starting point is to define the procedures for use: who needs access to the safe, for what purpose, and how often will the safe be opened?" says Myriam Bevilion.

A company that opens its safe 20-25 times a day needs a different type of lock than one that opens it once a day – otherwise the battery will soon run out.

The next step is to consider whether each person should only have access to the safe during a particular time of day, week or year, and how important it is to be able to register and log events so that it is possible to go back and check who opened the safe at a particular time.

"Other important factors are where the safe will be placed – indoors, outdoors, in the basement or in the back office – and whether the site is equipped with alarms, CCTV or other security equipment," Myriam Bevilion concludes. ■

TEXT: LEENA SEKKAT

LEARN MORE ABOUT LOCKS

Gunnebo Training Centre is arranging a number of courses on locks in 2009 for personnel and customers. One course is dedicated to Gunnebo's own XN range and the others focus on building lock knowledge, from a basic to an advanced level.

- The basic course focuses on general knowledge and defining various types of lock.
- The advanced course focuses on electronic lock features and functions.

FOUR STEPS TO THE RIGHT LOCK

1. How many people will use the safe?
2. Hierarchy of users?
3. How often will the safe be opened? Is access required at all times?
4. The trick is not to buy the most sophisticated lock, but to buy the right lock – the one that suits your specific application.

For more information please contact your local Gunnebo contact.