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THE PROFESSIONAL LOCKSMITH

The Official Publication of the
Greater Philadelphia Locksmiths Association

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Our next meeting will be held on
January 19th, 2026

Location:
Tiffany On The BLVD
9010 Roosevelt Blvd
Philadelphia, PA 19115

Time:
6:30PM for Dinner, 7:45PM for Meeting Only

Dinner Cost:
$5.00 Per member
$25.00 Per for non-members
The meeting is at no charge.

Program:
Alex Ruiz from Allegion

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

As we head into the holidays and get ready for the New Year, I want to thank everyone who continues to support GPLA. This association exists for one reason, to benefit our members, and we've got some new ideas and surprises coming in the months ahead that I think you'll really like.

GPLA works best when people show up and get involved. If you can, keep coming to meetings and consider bringing someone new along with you. A personal invite is one of the best ways to help the association grow.

Wishing you and your families a great holiday season and a successful New Year. I'm looking forward to what we'll accomplish together in 2026.

Paul Kline
President, GPLA

LOCKSMITH HUMOR

Why was the locksmith Santa's favorite helper?

Because he could unlock the magic of Christmas!



PROGRAM REVIEW

Killeen Security Products (KSP)

At the November 17th GPLA Membership meeting, Brian Strom from KSP conducted a presentation of KSP's current and upcoming products. Here is a summary of this presentation:

- KSP is a small but rapidly growing company with significant market penetration.
  - Family-run company with 32 employees.
  - Known for strong customer service (Karen and Kelly highlighted).
- Approximately 80% of KSP's sales are for 6-7 pin small format interchangeable cores (SFIC).
- KSP has invested in a new $2 million automated machine that can process a core in 11.5 seconds and cut two keys in 2.5 seconds, providing almost unlimited capacity.
- Brian presented KSP's versatile 408 convertible rim and mortise housing kit.
  - The product is a combination kit that functions as both a rim and mortise cylinder.
  - It is compatible with various systems, including ASSA, Medeco, Schlage, and small format cores.
  - The kit is designed for technicians to carry on their trucks to handle installations where incorrect hardware information was provided.
  - The product is approximately one-third the price of an OEM equivalent but offers three times the quality.
- KSP offers new, inexpensive extended cylinder housing.
  - A new product is an extended cylinder that can be adjusted from a ½ inch up to 4 ¼ inches.
  - All housing produced in the last two years has been pre-drilled to accept this extension.
  - The product is described as "crazy inexpensive" compared to competitors like Major, which requires drilling.
  - KSP also manufactures standard, non-convertible rim and mortise housing.
- The discussion covers custom and restricted keyway options available through KSP.

    - The standard extension screws only accommodate up to four and a quarter inch, but longer custom lengths could be possible with different screws.
    - While most products are standard, KSP does offer some restricted keyways.
    - An example was given of a friend at Harvard who paid $15,000 for a proprietary keyway, broached by KSP, which makes the standard price for cores and keys a bargain for him in the long run compared to systems from Medeco or ASSA.
- KSP is developing a new sidebar keyway.
    - The new keyway will be released to the broader market once testing is completed.
- Compares KSP's product quality and delivery times favorably against competitors like Best and Medeco.
    - KSP's solution is positioned as a significantly less expensive alternative.
    - The speaker criticizes Best's delivery times, citing lead times of 18-22 weeks, with 13 weeks being considered a "bargain."
    - While some customers are loyal to Best (comparing it to brands like Windex or Chrysler), KSP's quality is presented as superior.
    - The speaker notes they have not had a single return or problem with their Medeco SFIC-equivalent product in 13 years, unlike their experience with actual Medeco products.
    - Best's previous supply issues were attributed to material shortages, but KSP now has ample materials.
- KSP is now a supplier to its competitors, which may improve their delivery times and quality.
    - Brian implies that if competitors' delivery times and quality improve, it is likely because KSP is supplying them.
    - An anecdote was shared about a time when Best was going through distribution, highlighting a perceived issue with their approach, possibly related to the acquisition by Dormakaba ("Dora").
- The discussion touches on KSP's product focus and customer requests for specific finishes.
    - KSP's primary focus is on large format cores and housing, not products for Kwikset ("Korg").

    - Customers sometimes request black cylinders but are often dissatisfied when they learn only the housing is black and the core itself is silver, as they want the entire unit to be black.
    - A speaker suggests reframing this by telling customers the silver core provides a "nice contrast."
- The group discusses product finishes, and pricing.
    - It is noted that competitors like "duro" also have silver cores, and that oil-rubbed bronze finishes are no longer common.
    - The list price for a KSP product ranges from $47 to $95.

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GPLA MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 17, 2025
Location: Tiffany On The BLVD, Northeast Philadelphia
Time: Start 7:57 PM, End 9:21 PM (1 hour and 24 minutes)
Presiding: President Paul Kline

Opening:
Sven H. Sr. standing in for the Sergeant at Arms led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Guests Welcomed:
Brian Strom (KSP) and John Plumberg (South Penn)

Program:
Brian Strom from KSP conducted a presentation and a raffle for attendees, with a shirt available for everyone present. Details of Brian's presentation is provided in this December 2025 Newsletter.

Previous Meeting Minutes:
Not covered. October 2025 meeting did not meet quorum.

Notes about this meeting:

Quorum

- A rule is cited stating that if a quorum was not met at the previous month's meeting, it is automatically granted for the current month.
- Key Decision: The meeting will proceed officially despite not having a quorum, based on a pre-existing rule.

Zoom (on-line) Availability

- Zoom (on-line) attendance was not available at this meeting due to the absence of equipment.

Recording Secretary

- The recording secretary was not present at the meeting. Transcripts and audio recording of the meeting are being used to record the meeting minutes.

Treasurer's Report:

- The Treasurer, Marty, was unable to attend via Zoom.
- Marty's Treasurer's Report was accepted unanimously during the Board of Directors meeting.
- Action Item: Marty - Provide a copy of the Treasurer's Report to any member who requests it.

President's Report – Paul Kline:

- The organization intends to do whatever is necessary to benefit its members and will surprise them with new initiatives in the upcoming months.
- Paul emphasized the need for loyal members to support the organization and continue attending meetings, suggesting each member bring a new person.

Board of Directors Report – Sven K. Hellwig Sr.:

- No report provided.

Membership Report:

Membership Updates

- Mike N. (Membership Chairman) reported 12 applications under board review.

Clarification and Proposed Membership Changes

- Vetting requires attendance at two meetings.
- Proposal for a "locksmith-in-training" pathway
- Possible requirement of two classes before applying
- The Shop Member category allows any employee of a member to join for $25.
    - The numbering system for shop members is clarified: the first shop member from a company is assigned the letter 'A' after the primary member's number, the second is 'B', and so on.
- Suggested a "locksmith-in-training" category to welcome newcomers and connect them with mentors.
- "Apprentice" membership is best for those in formal locksmithing education (e.g., students at locksmith schools).

Membership Website Issues

- Website payments should be restricted until vetting is complete.
    - Proposed GPLA website changes to prevent incomplete applications.
- A new member's application failed due to file upload limits.
    - Multiple follow-ups were needed; photocopies were eventually accepted.
    - Apologies were made, highlighting website deficiencies.

Lower-Barrier Entry for Newcomers

Suggestions:

- Allow sign-ups to a mailing list for updates on classes/events.

- Tie apprenticeship to completing two classes to prove interest.
- This would help younger or financially constrained individuals who cannot afford full fees.
- Rising interest in classes shows the need for such pathways.

Education Committee:

Event Updates

- The planned "suppositum" event was canceled due to lack of time, materials, and key personnel dropping out.
- Confusion around the chairman's role added to uncertainty. A future event may be planned with more notice.
- A post-mortem cited logistical issues, weak commitment, and the loss of three long-serving committee members.
- Sven had advanced hotel funds but withdrew after momentum stalled; the hotel gave the date to another group.
- The symposium was meant to replace the convention, but its failure showed the need for fully committed organizers.

Ongoing Education

- Randy continues organizing smaller, year-round classes, with hopes they will run at multiple locations.

Future Event Models

- Sven proposed a "Super Sunday" one-day event with dealer tables and auctions to reduce workload.
- Volunteer burnout has made large, multi-day events and awards banquets unlikely.
- Key Decision: A CPR class will still be held ($20 fee, lunch buffet, at the hotel).
- CEU credits were discussed but deferred for later review.
- Action Item: Barry W. to help manage the educational/CEU component for future events.

Health and Welfare:

- Cliff is responding well to treatment and hopes to meet a few members for coffee when able.
    - His positive attitude was highlighted as important in his recovery.

- John Williams had a heart procedure and is feeling much better, with a minor issue managed by medication.
- Reminder: locksmiths working on older equipment should watch for asbestos, which is linked to lung and liver cancers.

Zoom (on-line) Meeting:

- All future meetings will have reliable Zoom access, after two recent failures.
- Problems occurred because the designated "Zoom master" was unavailable due to illness.
- Additional people will be assigned to ensure Zoom runs smoothly.
- The President and Chairman guarantee Zoom availability for the rest of their term.
- Zoom is considered essential for members and sometimes required for program content.
- Action Item (Mike): Notify 12 applicants that Zoom will be reliable and apologize for past issues.
- Action Item (Sven): Email Steve about a presenter who can only use Zoom.

Newsletter:

- Members are encouraged to read and contribute to the GPLA newsletter.
- The newsletter, managed by John DePew, is praised for quality and consistency.
- Past issues are archived on the GPLA website.
- Ari (Barry's son) was recognized as a younger member contributing an article.
- Sven stressed the importance of involving new, younger members.

Website and Social Media:

- The organization is considering making an investment into social media, a new website, YouTube, and podcasts to promote GPLA and vetted locksmiths.
  - Funds are available for support of these initiatives.
  - Key Decision: Hire a social media content specialist.
- Zoom recordings may be shared online as approved content.

Broader Strategy

- The board is considering Wikipedia as a platform to advertise GPLA.
- Consensus will be sought at the next board meeting.
- Goal: educate the public about GPLA.

Communications:

- Constant Contact is available if needed.

Legislation Reports:

Pennsylvania: No locksmith license required. Only a $50 contractor's license and re-contract filing are needed, separate from a general business license.

New Jersey: A specific locksmith license is required.

- Seen as a "double-edged sword": it reduces scammers but is burdensome and enforcement is weak.
- Penalties include fines of $5,000–$25,000, cease-and-desist orders, and property liens if fines aren't paid (no criminal charges like in Texas).
- Licensed locksmiths must display their license number on all business materials (vehicles, cards, letterhead, envelopes).
- A pending bill could allow the state to audit locksmiths' financial records. The bill's goal is to "chase out scammers."

Comparison: Pennsylvania has no such legislation and is considered more "self-vetting."

Program:

- The January meeting program has been confirmed to feature Alex Ruiz from Allegion.

By-Laws:

- The individual responsible, Vernon, was not present.
    - Action Item: Paul K. - Call Vern to ensure he attends the next board meeting.

Convention:

- GPLA's presence at the Yankee Security Convention was successful, especially in recruiting new members.
- Paul and Sven taught three well-attended classes.
- Several members used scholarships, which will likely be offered again.
- Collaboration with Yankee was positive, showing the value of associations working together.
- The GPLA booth was the most popular at the event.
- Mike N. was thanked for his strong efforts in recruiting at the booth.
- New members were recruited from near and far, aiming to grow GPLA with anyone interested in helping.

Old Business:

- No updates reported.

New Business:

- No updates reported.

Good of the Association:

- Nothing to report.

Tips and Tricks:

- **Residential:**
  - Lock Picking Tools - Basic picks (like an HPC hook) are no longer enough. More sophisticated tools are now needed.
- **Automotive:**
  - Items experienced in the field:
    - Fake OBD2 Port Blocker
      - Creates a decoy port that powers devices but blocks data.
      - Makes the car appear faulty to thieves using programmers.
      - Real port is hidden and wired separately.
      - Used as an anti-theft measure.
    - OBD2 Port Lock (Anti-Theft)
      - A keyed lock can secure the OBD2 port, blocking unauthorized access.
      - Works like a locking gas cap: simple, physical protection.
      - Designed to stop thieves who use programmers from exploiting the port.
    - Trailer Hitch Lock Vulnerability
      - A popular hockey-puck style trailer hitch lock was found to be weak.
      - Poor materials made it easy to break with force.
      - Can be bypassed using a soda can shim.
      - Cheap, poorly made locks (e.g., $12 Amazon specials) are widespread.
      - Watching YouTube videos (creator who covers "ball locks") to learn about the shortcomings of these locks without having to discover them firsthand.

Raffle:

- Sven H. Sr. acting as Sergeant at Arms announced that winners could choose between $28 cash or other prizes including swag bags, Lishi tools, and playing cards.
- Sven mentioned that some of the raffle items were from a donation by a locksmith who was going out of business.
- Donated items to be brought to a future meeting include a seized HPC machine (valued at $3,000, needs ~$500-600 in repairs) and a non-functional tubular cutting machine.

Adjournment:

- Motion to adjourn was made at 9:21PM by Tony and seconded by Sven.

Respectfully submitted:
John D. DePew, Recording Secretary

BUSINESS

Locksmith Business Plans for the New Year: Strategies for Growth and Security

As the calendar turns and a new year begins, locksmith businesses have a golden opportunity to reassess, realign, and revamp their strategies. Whether you're a solo operator or managing a growing team, a well-structured business plan can be the key to unlocking success in the months ahead. Here's how to craft a forward-thinking locksmith business plan for the new year.

1. Reflect on the Past Year

Before planning ahead, take stock of the previous year's performance:

- Revenue and Profit Margins: What services were most profitable?
- Customer Feedback: What did clients love—and what needs improvement?
- Operational Bottlenecks: Were there delays, staffing issues, or equipment failures?

Use this data to identify trends and areas for improvement.

2. Define Clear Goals

Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for the year.

Examples:

- Increase residential service calls by 20%
- Launch a mobile key duplication unit by Q3
- Expand into commercial access control systems

3. Embrace Technology

Modern locksmithing is more than just keys and locks. Consider:

- Smart Lock Installation: Offer services for digital and biometric locks
- Online Booking: Streamline scheduling with a user-friendly website or app
- CRM Tools: Use customer relationship management software to track leads and use these metrics to adjust your strategy throughout the year.

4. Upgrade Your Marketing Strategy

A strong digital presence is essential:

- Search Engine Optimization & Local Listings: Optimize your website and Google Business Profile
- Social Media: Share tips, success stories, and promotions
- Referral Programs: Reward loyal customers for spreading the word

5. Invest in Training and Tools

Stay ahead of the curve by:

- Attending industry workshops and certifications
- Upgrading tools for efficiency and safety
- Training staff on the latest lock technologies

6. Strengthen Partnerships

Collaborate with:

- Real estate agents for move-in rekeying services
- Property managers for ongoing maintenance contracts
- Security companies for integrated solutions

7. Review Legal and Insurance Needs

Ensure your business is protected:

- Renew licenses and certifications
- Review liability and vehicle insurance
- Update contracts and service agreements

8. Monitor KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) Monthly

Track key performance indicators such as:

- Average response time
- Customer satisfaction scores
- Conversion rates from leads to jobs

Use these metrics to adjust your strategy throughout the year.

By setting a clear vision and adapting to evolving customer needs, your locksmith business can thrive in the new year. With the right mix of innovation, service excellence, and strategic planning, you'll be well-positioned to unlock new opportunities.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

Autel Programmers Under Fire: Why Key Functions Are Being Shut Down

In 2025, automotive locksmithing professionals using Autel key programmers are facing a growing crisis: manufacturers are forcing the removal of critical immobilizer and key programming capabilities from Autel devices. This shift is part of a broader industry trend where automakers are tightening control over vehicle software and security systems.

What's Happening to Autel Devices?

Autel's popular IM508 and IM608 programmers have long been favored for their affordability and wide vehicle coverage. But recent developments have changed the landscape:

- Ford Motor Company has reportedly required Autel to remove immobilizer programming functions for Ford vehicles starting August 25, 2025. This means users will lose the ability to add or erase keys on many Ford models.
- Toyota North America has also pressured Autel to disable "all keys lost" functions for Toyota vehicles, citing violations of software licensing agreements. As a result, users can no longer reset smart boxes or generate analog keys on affected models.

Why Are Manufacturers Doing This?

The primary reasons include:

- Cybersecurity concerns: Automakers are increasingly worried about unauthorized access to vehicle systems, especially with rising car thefts involving cloned or hacked keys.
- Control over diagnostics and repairs: By limiting third-party access, OEMs can steer customers toward dealerships and authorized service centers.
- Legal liability: Manufacturers want to avoid potential lawsuits stemming from unauthorized or improper programming.

Impact on Locksmiths and Technicians

These restrictions are creating serious challenges:

- Loss of functionality: Key programming for newer vehicles is becoming nearly impossible without OEM tools or credentials.
- Increased costs: Locksmiths must now invest in dealer-level equipment or obtain NASTF credentials to access secure vehicle data.
- Reduced competitiveness: Independent shops are losing ground to dealerships with exclusive access to programming capabilities.

What Can Professionals Do?

- Stay informed: Monitor updates from Autel and industry forums to understand which functions are being phased out.
- Explore Alternative Tools which still support the features removed from Autel.
- Invest in OEM-compliant tools: Consider tools that integrate with manufacturer systems or meet NASTF Secure Data Release Model (SDRM) standards.
- Advocate for Right to Repair: Support legislation that ensures fair access to vehicle data and programming interfaces.
    - Contact local representatives
    - Join industry coalitions
    - Educate customers about the importance of repair freedom

The shutdown of Autel's key programming functions marks a turning point in the automotive locksmithing industry. As manufacturers tighten their grip, independent professionals must adapt quickly—or risk being locked out of the future.

If you have an idea for an article or you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please send John D. DePew an email at smart4locksmith@gmail.com

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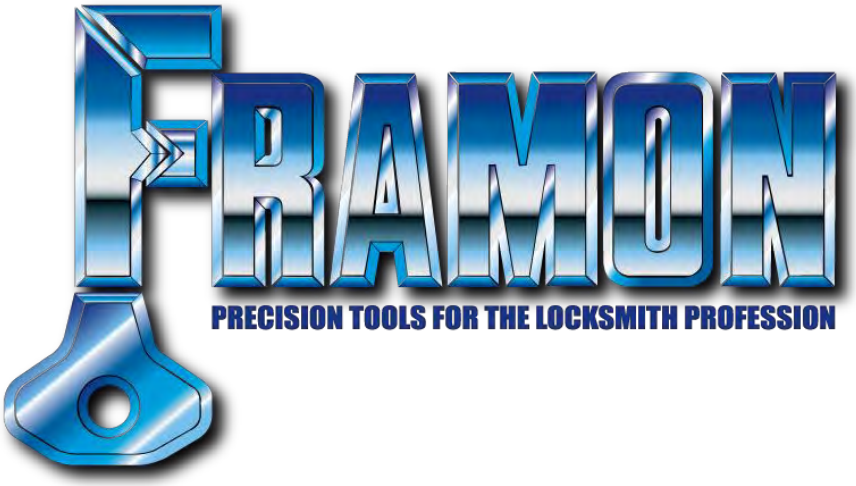
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