



## **Downtown businesses urged to buy “Knox Box” for fire safety**

**Ames, Iowa** – The Main Street Cultural District (MSCD) and the Ames Fire Department are partnering on a mission to protect the property of the historic downtown businesses in the heart of Ames as well as those throughout the community.

“When we get a call for a fire downtown it is always a concern because of the type of construction – all of the buildings are connected,” said Ames Firefighter Wes Hubbard. “When a fire starts in one, there is always the possibility that you could lose a whole block of Main Street.”

Hubbard felt that fear recently when the call came out for a fire in the building at 312 Main Street. The tenants who lived over a neighboring building returned home to the smell of smoke. When first responders arrived on the scene they knew they were dealing with a fire, but had no easy way to get into the burning building and the buildings on either side that were in imminent danger. Hubbard says there is an easy solution for that problem.

“A Knox Box on the buildings would have given us quicker access to the building and avoided potential smoke and water damage,” said Hubbard. “It would have also made it unnecessary for us to break any locks to gain entry.”

A Knox Box is a small lock box made out of thick metal that building owners purchase and attach to their building somewhere. The box is very secure and holds a key to the business. Every Knox Box in town opens with the same key, which firefighters bring on scene. The only way a firefighter can access the key is to enter his or her personal passcode. Hubbard also points out that a fire doesn’t always show from the outside of the building. Often one can be burning inside and doing more damage while fire crews are waiting for an owner to show up with a key.

“With the Knox Box the fire department can access a key and not have to wait for an owner,” said Terry Stark, owner of Chocolaterie Stam. “If they have access to a key then they don’t have to physically break in to check things out.”

Stark has a Knox Box for his building that he shares with Duck Worth Wearing. Since the cost of the box is a one-time expense, sharing it cut that cost in half. Stark says he feels secure in the knowledge that his building is protected.

“We want all of our historic downtown businesses to be around for generations to come,” said Cindy Hicks, Executive Director of the MSCD. “The faster the fire department can get into your building in the case of an emergency, the less damage there is likely to be.”

The boxes all have reflective tape on them so the fire department can locate them easily when arriving and each business with one has a Knox Box sticker on the front door.

For more information about Knox Boxes, contact Fire Station No. 1 at 515-239-5107.

*The Main Street Cultural District was established on January 1, 2004. Its mission is to advance and promote downtown as the destination district in the heart of our community. To keep updated on MSCD happenings, become a fan of the Main Street Cultural District on Facebook, bookmark [www.AmesDowntown.org](http://www.AmesDowntown.org), or contact our office at 515-233-3472. MSCD is an affiliate organization of the Ames Chamber of Commerce.*