

Virginia Board of Pharmacy

Guidance for Applicants and Licensees on Alarm Requirements

This document is intended to assist applicants and licensees with facility alarm requirements. Please note that different facilities may have slightly different alarm requirements. Links to the specific regulations that address alarm requirements are found at the end of this guidance document.

Pursuant to 18VAC110-20-180, 18VAC110-20-710, 18VAC110-30-120, and 18VAC110-40-40, all alarm devices must be maintained in operating order, be a sound, microwave, photoelectric, ultrasonic or any other generally accepted and suitable device, have an auxiliary source of power such as a battery backup, fully protect the entire permitted area, and be capable of detecting breaking by any means when activated.

The Board interprets the requirement to “fully protect” the entire permitted area to be accomplished by the installation of motion sensors. Door contacts or cameras, while also helpful in securing the area, are not required by regulation.

For the alarm to be capable of sending a signal to the monitoring entity when the primary line of communication is breached, the secondary line of communication should be via a different method than the primary line. For instance, if the primary line of communication is via internet, the backup, or secondary line, may be via cellular service.

To satisfy the requirement of having at least one “hard-wired” communication method such as in 18VAC110-20-180, the Board has accepted either a telephone line (Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) or Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN)) or an internet connection that is hardwired from the alarm panel to a router. Some of the newer systems have a dual path alarm panel/keypad combination which is acceptable.

To demonstrate compliance during the inspection, the licensee or the alarm technician should verify that the primary line is hardwired and be capable of turning off the primary line in order to test the secondary line of communication. This may involve identifying and removing a cellular card if the primary method is via cellular. After the test, the inspector will verify with the monitoring entity that signals were received both on the primary line as well as the secondary line.

The Board recommends that an alarm technician familiar with the facility’s alarm setup be present when the inspector is testing the alarm. The alarm technician may be able to rectify certain issues during the inspection such as adding additional motion sensors or replacing them if they are not operating correctly. This may save time, cost and the potential need for a reinspection if the alarm does not meet the requirements of the inspection.

Once an alarm is approved, any changes made to the alarm such as a change in the panel or keypad/panel combination, addition of motion sensors, or moving of a motion sensor will

require a remodel inspection. Simply replacing an existing motion sensor does not require a remodel inspection. Be mindful of boxes, banners, supplies, etc. on shelves that may be blocking a motion sensor and result in not having full coverage. Also, changes to the size and height of certain shelving, refrigerators, or automation equipment may result in the need to adjust your motion sensors which would require a remodel inspection.

References

[18VAC110-20-180](#) (Pharmacy alarm requirements)

[18VAC110-20-710](#) (Controlled substance registration alarm requirements)

[18VAC110-30-120](#) (Practitioners of the healing arts selling controlled substances alarm requirements)

[18VAC110-50-40](#) (Wholesale distributor, third party logistics provider, warehouse, and manufacturer alarm requirements)