

Healthcare Facility Safeguards Pharmaceuticals to Keep Patients Safe

Patients and healthcare professionals expect the highest quality pharmaceuticals from their hospital system. Failing to store medications according to manufacturers' instructions can cause efficacy issues when treating patients. Facilities waste thousands of dollars when they have to discard drugs because they weren't stored properly.

No one knows this better than Michael Shaughnessy, a maintenance mechanic specialist with Stormont-Vail HealthCare based in Topeka, Kansas. When healthcare professionals need to monitor medical refrigerators and freezers, he's the guy they call.

"Temperature is the most important consideration when storing these drugs. Not all medicines are alike," Shaughnessy explained. "Some require refrigeration, and some need to be kept well below freezing. But others can lose strength if they are frozen. And some medications must be kept at a designated room temperature."

Time-Tested Reliability

Shaughnessy relies on Sensaphone monitoring devices for pharmaceutical storage throughout the hospital system. Stormont-Vail has been using these monitors and accompanying sensors for ten years. Shaughnessy is responsible for selecting, installing and maintaining these temperature and power monitoring systems. They provide cost-effective remote monitoring of cold storage units and four to eight environmental and equipment conditions.

Stormont-Vail is an integrated healthcare system that serves a multi-county region in northeast Kansas. It is

comprised of Stormont-Vail Regional Health Center and the Cotton-O'Neil and PediatricCare Clinics, employing more than 200 physicians and offering a variety of ancillary services.

Stormont-Vail HealthCare has been named one of the nation's 100

Top Hospitals® by Truven Health Analytics, for patient care, operational efficiency and



financial stability. The system has also been recognized as a Top Performer on Key Quality Measures® by The Joint Commission for attaining and sustaining excellence in accountability measures. The Joint Commission is the leading accreditor of healthcare organizations in the United States.

Stormont-Vail primarily uses Sensaphone systems to monitor refrigerators and freezers holding pharmaceuticals. Their sensing range is -20 °F to 150 °F (-30 °C to 65 °C). In addition, some systems measure ambient temperature in research drug areas where regulations require rooms to be kept within a certain range.

Because this region of Kansas is prone to severe storms, it is also important for them to monitor the power of their cold storage units. When notified of a power outage, medical personnel can act quickly to move medications to safety.

"We have 53 base units monitoring 132 zones. All of the sensors have been used for temperature and power," said Shaughnessy. If the Sensaphone monitoring devices detect a deviation in temperature, they send telephone alerts to up to four or eight people, depending on the unit model. At Stormont-Vail, alarms go to security personnel who are on duty 24/7 and personnel responsible for the unit in question.

He recently expanded the system's use by adding a magnetic door sensor to keep better track of a remote pharmacy.

Keeping Medications Safe System Wide

Ensuring that pharmaceutical inventory is maintained



properly is vital to the daily management of all Stormont-Vail facilities. Shaughnessy has installed about one-third of the 53 units in the past four years alone.

Remote monitoring of pharmaceutical storage units helps healthcare

systems to stay compliant with internal, governmental and accreditation regulations.

Although The Joint Commission does not specifically require temperature logs for refrigerators and freezers used for medication storage, it requires medications

to be stored according to manufacturers' recommendations.

The Joint Commission also requires healthcare organizations to maintain and monitor equipment performance. If the facility monitors temperatures, it must regularly track them and note when they deviate from the required ranges for all stored drugs. Healthcare facilities also must have a process for disposing of medication from a refrigerator or freezer that has deviated from the recommended temperature range.

"Sensaphone systems have always worked well to alert personnel to temperature fluctuations – whether due to a door left open, equipment malfunction or power outage," said Shaughnessy, who receives a report of all alarms and outcomes.

"As Stormont-Vail HealthCare grows to serve more people in the region, we continue to rely on these monitors," he added. "They are durable and perform well for a long time. And the immediate notification allows for the appropriate people to take fast action to protect the quality of the medications and safeguard patient care."

Sensaphone designs and builds active remote monitoring and early detection products for a wide range of markets that quickly and effectively provide alerts to problems at remote locations. Over 400,000 Sensaphone systems are in use today around the world with superior customer satisfaction.

Contact Sensaphone for the right solution and for pricing:
Call us toll free at 877-373-2700 or email us at sales@sensaphone.com.
901 Tryens Road - Aston, PA 19014

