

Module 11: Low Voltage & Security

Goal: Learn the basics of a low-voltage and security contractor's desk so you can take service calls, ask the right questions, sort what's urgent, book techs, and follow up like a pro.

All names, phone numbers, addresses, and companies in this lesson are made-up examples. They are marked "(example)".

Why This Matters to the Employer

Security systems protect people, buildings, and property. When a door won't lock or an alarm system is down, the customer feels exposed right now. The desk is the first voice they hear. You calm them down, get the facts, and get the right tech moving. You don't need to be a technician. You need to know the words, ask good questions, and keep private things private.

The Systems You'll Hear About

Most low-voltage and security companies work on some mix of these:

- **Access control.** Card readers, key fobs, keypads, and electric locks that decide who can open a door. Run by a controller and software.
- **Cameras (CCTV).** Video cameras and the recorder or cloud system that saves the video. CCTV stands for closed-circuit television.
- **Intrusion alarms.** Door contacts, motion sensors, glass-break sensors, a keypad, and a control panel. It detects a break-in and sounds the alarm.
- **Structured cabling.** The network and data wiring in walls and ceilings that connects computers, phones, cameras, and readers.
- **Intercom.** Door stations and video intercoms so people can talk to visitors and buzz them in.
- **Alarm monitoring.** Many alarm systems send signals to a **monitoring center** that watches them around the clock and calls the customer or police. That center is often a separate company your office works with.

The short version: Access control decides who gets in. Cameras record what happened. Alarms catch a break-in. Cabling connects it all.

Taking a Service Call: What to Ask

Use the same calm call steps from Module 1. Then get these details:

- **Who and how to reach them.** Name, best phone number, and read it back.
- **Site.** Business name and full address. Which building, door, or area? (More in Module 3.)
- **System type.** Is it a door or card reader, a camera, the alarm, the intercom, or the network wiring?

- **What's not working.** What did they expect to happen, and what happens instead? When did it start? One device or many?
- **Is the site secure right now?** Can doors be locked? Is anyone stuck in or locked out? Is the alarm able to arm?
- **Panel or keypad messages.** Ask them to read the screen word for word. Write it exactly and read it back.
- **Access for the tech.** Who meets the tech, and when is the site open?

Urgency: What Goes First

Not every call is an emergency. Use the triage habits from Module 2. Here is a simple guide. Your company's rules come first.

Situation	Usually	Desk response
Door won't lock, or a main entry is stuck open	Urgent	The building is not secure. Get the on-call tech or service manager now.
Alarm system down or won't arm	Urgent	The site has no alarm protection. Flag it to the service manager right away.
Many cameras or the recorder offline	High	The customer can't see or record. Book service soon and tell your manager.
One camera out or a blurry picture	Routine	Get the details and book a normal service visit.
Request for a new reader, camera, or cable run	Not service	That's new work. Send it to sales or the estimator.

If anyone says there is a break-in, a person in danger, or an active alarm with signs of a crime, tell them to call 911 first. Then follow your company's emergency steps.

Scheduling Techs

- **Match the tech to the system.** Some techs know access control, some know cameras, some do cabling.
- **Confirm the site contact and access.** Who meets the tech? Do they need a badge, a key, or a ceiling ladder?
- **Note what parts may be needed.** If the caller says a reader is cracked, say so in the ticket.
- **Give a window you can keep.** Then call back if anything changes. (More in Module 4.)

Permits and Inspections, in General

Some new installs and bigger jobs need a permit or an inspection from the local city or county. Rules are different in each area. You may be asked to help with paperwork or book an inspection. If a customer asks whether their job needs a permit, don't guess. Say, "Good question. Let me get that to our project manager so you get the right answer."

Working With the Monitoring Center

When a monitored alarm system is being worked on, the monitoring center needs to know. Otherwise a test or a door opening could look like a real alarm, and they may send police.

- **Placing a system on test.** Before the tech starts, someone calls the monitoring center and asks them to put the account **on test**. Signals still come in, but the center does not dispatch during that time.
 - **Get the details.** Write down the account name, how long it's on test, and the name of the operator you spoke to.
 - **Take it off test.** When the tech is done, make sure the account comes off test. A system left on test is not being watched.
 - **Follow your company's steps.** Some companies let only certain people place accounts on test. Ask who does it where you work.
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Keep Codes and Passwords Private

Security systems run on secrets. Treat them like keys to the building.

- **Never read a code, password, or passcode out loud** where others can hear, and never put one in an email or text.
 - **Don't give codes to callers.** Even if they sound friendly. Verify who they are using your company's steps.
 - **Keep codes out of open notes.** Use the secure place your company provides.
 - **If a code may be exposed,** tell your manager right away so it can be changed.
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Notes That Help the Tech

Good notes save a trip. Write what the customer said, then the facts (Module 6):

- Site name, address, and the exact door, camera, or area.
- System type and what's not working.
- Exact panel or keypad message, word for word.
- Whether the site is secure.
- Who to meet, how to get in, and the best callback number.
- Whether the alarm account needs to go on test.

Parts Basics

You'll hear these parts names a lot (Module 5):

- **Camera.** Records video. Cameras come in shapes like dome and bullet.
- **Reader.** The card or fob reader by the door.
- **Cable.** The wire that carries data and power. You'll hear names like network cable or alarm wire.
- **Power supply.** Gives power to locks, readers, or cameras. A failed power supply can knock out several devices at once.

When a part is needed, write the location, the type if known, and any model number the tech gives you. Don't guess the part. Ask the tech.

Professional Follow-Up

- **Call back when you said you would**, even if you only have an update.
 - **After the visit**, confirm the problem is fixed and the system is off test.
 - **If a quote is needed**, send it to whoever prices the work, then follow up with the customer.
 - **Close the ticket** with what was done and any open items. (More in Module 7 and Module 8.)
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Do This, Not This

Instead of this...	Do this...
Tell a caller "One camera out is an emergency, we'll come now"	Use the triage guide and book the right priority
Read an alarm code back to a caller	Verify who they are and keep codes private
Let the tech start without telling the monitoring center	Make sure the account is placed on test first
Forget to take the account off test	Confirm it comes off test before you close the ticket
Guess about a permit	Send the question to the project manager

Example Scenario

EXAMPLE SCENARIO. All names and numbers are made up.

Sam answers the phone at Example Security Systems (example).

Sam: Thanks for calling Example Security Systems, this is Sam. How can I help?

Caller: Hi, this is Rosa Diaz (example), office manager at Bayside Dental (example). Our front door won't lock, and the keypad says something weird.

Sam: Thanks, Rosa. What's the best number to reach you?

Rosa: (555) 555-0142 (example).

Sam: That's (555) 555-0142? Great. Is anyone in danger, or any sign of a break-in?

Rosa: No, nothing like that. The door just won't lock.

Sam: Good. Can you read me the keypad screen word for word?

Rosa: It says "System not ready" and "Zone 3 fault."

Sam: Got it. What's the address?

Rosa: 100 Example Blvd (example).

Sam: Thanks. With the front door not locking, your building isn't secure, so this is urgent. I'm sending it to our on-call tech now. I'll call you back with a time. Can someone stay with the door until then?

Rosa: Yes, I'll stay.

Sam: Perfect. Please don't share your alarm code with anyone who calls. Our tech won't need it over the phone.

Sam writes the ticket with the exact keypad message, the door, the site contact, and that the site is not secure. He notes that the alarm account will need to go on test before work starts, then messages the on-call tech. He calls Rosa back with the tech's window, as promised.

What went right: Sam checked for danger first. He got the exact keypad words. He saw that a door that won't lock means the site isn't secure, so he made it urgent. He kept codes private, planned for the monitoring center, and called back as promised.

Quick Tips

- Access control decides who gets in. Cameras record. Alarms catch a break-in. Cabling connects it all.
- Ask: site, system type, what's not working, is it secure, and the exact screen message.
- A door that won't lock or an alarm that's down is urgent. One camera out is usually routine.
- Put a monitored account on test before work, and take it off test after.
- Never share codes or passwords.
- Leave permit and code questions to the project manager.
- Call back when you said you would.

Quiz

1. Which system decides who can open a door?

- a) Cameras
- b) Access control
- c) Structured cabling

Answer: b. Access control uses readers, fobs, and electric locks to control who gets in.

2. A caller says the front door won't lock. How urgent is it?

- a) Routine, book next week
- b) Urgent, the site is not secure
- c) Send it to sales

Answer: b. A door that won't lock leaves the building open. Get the on-call tech or service manager now.

3. A customer says one camera in the parking lot is blurry. What do you do?

- a) Call the on-call tech right away
- b) Get the details and book a normal service visit
- c) Tell them to call 911

Answer: b. One camera out is usually routine.

4. Before a tech works on a monitored alarm system, what should happen?

- a) The account is placed on test with the monitoring center
- b) The customer turns off the power
- c) Nothing

Answer: a. Placing it on test helps stop a false dispatch while the tech works.

5. A caller asks you to read back their alarm code. What do you do?

- a) Read it back so they have it
- b) Text it to them
- c) Don't share it. Verify who they are and follow your company's steps

Answer: c. Codes and passwords stay private.

6. The keypad shows a message. What do you write in the ticket?

- a) "Keypad error"
- b) The exact words, read back to the caller
- c) Nothing, the tech will see it

Answer: b. Exact words help the tech plan and bring the right parts.

7. A customer asks if their new camera job needs a permit. What's the best answer?

- a) "No, never."
- b) "Yes, always."
- c) "Good question. Let me get that to our project manager."

Answer: c. Rules change by area. Don't guess.