

AED Devices Save Lives: Additional Considerations for your Institution

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AED devices have proven to save lives and have become an affordable tool for many private and public establishments to add to their safety and risk management program. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports a decreased chance of survival by 7 to 10 percent for each minute that passes without defibrillation. Having access to an AED immediately can make the difference between life and death.

An AED is a device, approximately the size of a laptop, which directs the user via voice prompts to deliver electric shock to a cardiac arrest victim after the machine detects abnormalities in the person's heart rhythm. The current is delivered through the victim's chest through adhesive electrode pads. The goal of using an AED is to help the heart re-establish a rhythm on its own.

Rescue equipment, like an AED, is not just designed for use in medical facilities. In fact, OSHA issued a statement in 2001 urging employers to make AEDs available in their workplaces. This statement came shortly after the Cardiac Arrest Survival Act (CASA) was put into law, which called for AEDs to be placed in all federal buildings. While having an AED in the workplace can save lives, it's important to develop a training program, along with additional legal and insurance considerations. More importantly given the many visitors that enter your space, it has become a standard to provide for them.

PLACING AN AED AT YOUR PUBLIC GARDEN

By purchasing an AED for your institution, you may potentially save the life of an employee, volunteer or guest. Cardiac arrest victims lose consciousness, have no pulse and stop breathing within a matter of moments. At this time, the heart's contractions become chaotic spasms, so it cannot pump blood properly to the brain or the rest of the body. But by using an AED, a heartbeat can be restarted by establishing a regular heart rhythm.

AEDs are extremely easy to use for those who are properly trained. Only individuals with proper training should operate an AED to avoid injuring themselves and others. Not only do CPR and AED training courses provide information on how to effectively use these rescue techniques, they also instruct individuals on how to protect themselves while providing care.

Purchasing an AED may also protect your institution from litigation, as not being able to properly respond to emergencies may pose a liability. For example, a theme park was found negligent for not having a defibrillator on hand to respond to a pediatric cardiac emergency.



Lufthansa Airlines and United Airlines also faced litigation for not providing adequate treatment to passengers suffering 2 from cardiac arrest. If an AED and an AED training program had been in place, they may have avoided costly legal battles and saved a life.

There are many success stories; we are aware of Garden staff who have used their AED successfully and in at least one instance have been credited with saving the life of a guest.

DEVELOPING AN AED PROGRAM

If you decide to purchase an AED for your institution, you must also create an AED program to ensure that the machine is used properly and effectively. Consider the following recommendations when designing your own AED program.

- Establish clear responsibilities for each role in the program.
- Obtain the guidance of a physician to oversee the direction and control of your program. This person will assist you in determining where to place the AED(s), ensure that proper training is given to employees and can review your program each time an AED is used on-site. The physician can also assist your facility in complying with regulatory requirements and establish a relationship with emergency medical personnel.
- Program must comply with federal and state regulations, including requiring every person who may use an AED to be properly trained in CPR and AED use.
- Devise a written AED program for each location in which an AED is located.
- The AED should be placed in key areas of the garden such as the visitor, event and education centers.
- Share information about your AED program with emergency medical personnel to assure that proper protocol is met.
- Integrate the AED usage program into a broader emergency response action plan.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations regarding servicing, testing and replacement. Keep records of these duties as well.
- Devise an AED quality assurance program including a review of each use of the AED, training records and program evaluations.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN AED PROGRAM

- Determine the needs of your institution – How many devices do you need and how long will it take emergency medical personnel to arrive both at your facility and at the emergency site?
- Determine your budget to purchase the equipment, train your employees and maintain the program diligently. What legal ramifications should you consider as well?
- Identify staff to be trained and incorporate these safety responsibilities into their job descriptions.



LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some institutions are reluctant to implement an AED program out of fear of litigation. Yet, according to the American Heart Association, there are currently no known lawsuits against individuals providing CPR or AED care while acting as “good Samaritans.” All 50 states have AED Good Samaritan laws in place to protect laypersons that perform emergency acts within the scope of their training, and act with good intentions. Visit www.csg.org or contact your state’s EMS department (generally part of your state’s Health Department) for more information on Good Samaritan laws. It is also wise to consult legal counsel before beginning a new program such as this.

INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Maintaining the appropriate insurance coverage is imperative when implementing an AED program; the General Liability coverage should incorporate liability protection for acts by good Samaritans. Establishing proper limits to adequately protect your staff and institution is also essential to the process.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please call a member of the BHS Insurance Public Garden team at (800)350-7676