

Safety Talk

AED's

According to OSHA, in 1999 and 2000, of the 6,339 workplace fatalities, 815 were caused by sudden cardiac arrest. Most of these deaths occurred outside of the hospital; the current out-of-hospital survival rates are between one and five percent. These statistics seem to point to a very real need for increased and continued training in CPR and the use of AEDs or Automated External Defibrillators. To help explain how this affects you and your workplace, we'll go through some frequently asked questions.

What is sudden cardiac arrest?

A normal heart beat is caused by rhythmic electrical impulses. An SCA (sudden cardiac arrest) is usually caused by arrhythmias or abnormal heart rhythms. The majority of SCAs are caused by ventricular fibrillation, which is a condition where the electrical impulses of the lower heart chambers suddenly become chaotic, causing the heart to stop pumping blood. Unless the heart returns to its normal rhythm, death occurs in a matter of minutes. SCAs are not predictable, with many victims showing no history of heart problem; they strike anyone, anytime, anywhere.

Is SCA the same as a heart attack?

No, a heart attack is the death of the muscle that makes of the heart. It's caused by a loss of the blood supply to that part of the heart and the person typically has symptoms leading to the attack. SCA is an issue involving the heart's electrical impulses.

What is the most recent treatment for SCA?

According to the American Red Cross, there are 4 critical steps, the "Cardiac Chain of Survival" that should be used to treat SCA. The steps are:

- Early access to care- call 911 or EMS immediately
- Start CPR as soon as possible
- Defibrillate as soon as possible (AED)
- Early advanced cardiac life support

All the links help increase a victim's survival rate but defibrillation is seen as the most critical step.

What is defibrillation?

It's an external electrical current that "resets" and returns an irregular heart beat to the normal rhythm. Defibrillation is most successful when done within 4 minutes of the collapse. An AED is a portable device used to defibrillate.

Why do we need AEDs in the workplace?

150 million Americans spend more than ½ of their waking hours each day at work. It makes sense that more lives will be saved by having AEDs in workplaces of all types. The Red Cross states that where ever groups of people gather, the risk of an SCA is likely.

Do I need to be trained?

Proper training in CPR and AED are two crucial parts of successfully helping someone survive and SCA. Having more, well trained people in the workplace can help save lives.

Why not wait for EMS?

A victim's best chance for survival is if CPR and defibrillation occurs within 4 minutes of the collapse. Many times an EMS crew's response time is longer. Also, not all emergency medical agencies are equipped with AEDs.

Could I give an unnecessary shock while using an AED?

No, AEDs are designed to only allow a shock to be given if an arrhythmia is detected. If it doesn't detect the need for a shock, it will instruct you to perform CPR.

Is it safe to use an AED on a metal surface?

Yes, as long as appropriate precautions are taken. The defibrillator's electrodes should not contact the metal surface and no one should touch the victim when the shock is discharged.

Can an AED be used around water?

It is safe to use AEDs in rain and snow. Neither the rescuer nor the victim should be positioned in a puddle of water. You should always use common sense and follow the manufacturer's recommendations when using an AED.

Discussion Questions

What is the difference between a heart attack and a sudden cardiac arrest?

What is meant by the Cardiac Chain of Survival?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

____/____/____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

____/____/____
Date