

A guide to defibrillators

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Why do I need a defibrillator?



Each year, over 7 million people suffer from a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) with no warning and only 5 - 10% of those affected will survive.



But with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), survival rates from a SCA rocket up to 75%.



With statistics like these, it's shocking to find out 52% of businesses never even consider buying a defibrillator (Facilities Management Journal 2017).



84% of SCA events happen outside of a healthcare setting. And when you take into account each minute that passes by without defibrillation reduces survival rates by 7 - 10%... it makes for scary reading!

What would you do if someone went into sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) in front of you?



You'd call 999 without even thinking about it, of course, but what about after that?



While waiting for the paramedics to arrive, what steps would you take to boost their chance of survival?



Our emergency services are wonderful, but they're not as quick as SCA – and sadly, they never will be.



When someone calls 999 for an SCA victim, this type of call falls under 'Category 1' and is pushed to the top of the priority list.



Response-time for Category 1 calls is 8 minutes.



If they do not receive treatment until 8 minutes, their chance of survival will be around 20%.



The sooner you start to CPR coupled with defibrillation the greater chance of survival.

Your employees and visitors' safety and wellbeing matters

Every person should go home safe at the end of their working day.

Tragically, this isn't the case, and a huge 13% of workplace fatalities are from SCA ([OSHA](#)).

There's currently no UK legislation that requires workplaces to have an AED. However, you could be liable for negligence in failing to take appropriate safety precautions.

Additionally, the Health and Safety Executive places a duty on businesses to carry out a thorough risk assessment. If the assessment identifies the requirement for an AED, the HSE will expect you to have one and recommends your staff should be trained in its use.

Factors which increase the risk of an SCA, and should be kept in mind during your risk assessment, are:

Urban or Remote Locations

These often result in longer response times by emergency services.

An Aging Workforce - Anyone can suffer from an SCA but the risk increases with age. You should check how many of your employees are over the age of 45 and invest in the appropriate amount of AEDs.

What is a Defib?

An Automated External Defibrillator (AED or just defib) is a small, light-weight, portable device that can read a person's heart rhythm and deliver a shock if needed.

It's this shock that may restore a normal heart rhythm and potentially save a person's life.

AEDs are designed to be easy to use; even if you've never been trained to use one! There are two types of AEDs; Semi-Automatic or a Fully Automatic defibrillator.

The difference between the two is simple; with a semi-auto model, you control the delivery of the shock using the shock button and with a fully, the unit will deliver the shock automatically – leaving you to concentrate on chest compressions.

Defibrillators are very easy to use. Although they don't all look the same, they all function in broadly the same way.

You don't need training to use one. The machine gives clear spoken instructions – all you have to do is follow them - and it won't shock someone unless they need it.



Static and cPAD defibrillators



Static

Placed inside a building and available for as long as the building remains open, such as an office between 9am - 5pm.



Community Public Access (cPAD)

Placed inside an external, locked cabinet, in the community that can be opened with a code provided by the 999 call taker should it be needed.



The most important consideration is that those who might need to use an AED know where it is kept and how to access it quickly. No barrier should be put in the way of anyone collecting it when it is needed; it should not be locked away and inaccessible.

Things to consider

Users of an AED are not expected to carry out any maintenance tasks other than replacing expired batteries, electrode pads, and other consumable items (razor, airway adjuncts, plastic gloves). Even then, the shelf-life of these (unused) is usually 3 - 5 years, so any maintenance tasks are infrequent. In all cases the manufacturer's instructions should be followed.



You will need to nominate a custodian, someone who can check on the unit on a weekly basis. They will need to complete a check list to ensure that the device, if needed, is able to be deployed. This checklist will need to be sent to the North West Ambulance Service at the end of every month.



Although AEDs are designed to be used by anyone, a familiarisation session can give people a confidence boost if they ever find themselves in a situation where they need to use one.

How Heartbeat can help you...



Remember - a SCA can happen to anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

As a cardiac charity we can get a considerable discount on these lifesaving machines. Although we will buy the AED on your behalf these units are yours to maintain.



As such, we believe defibrillators should be thought of in the same way as fire extinguishers: integral to the workplace and easily accessible to everyone.



We also offer familiarisation training throughout Lancashire.



By investing in a defibrillator (or more than one!), you'll provide your employees, customers and visitors with quick access to a life-saving device.



To buy your defibrillator, or simply find out more, get in touch with us today on 01772 717147.

FAQs

Q. Can anyone use the Automated External Defibrillator?

A. The Resuscitation Council (UK) made a statement in January 2009 to say it was the view of the Resuscitation Council (UK) that the use of AEDs should not be restricted to trained personnel.

Q. What about maintenance of the equipment?

A. The AED mainly takes care of itself. It conducts a self-test every day or week and signals when the battery is low or if a problem is detected. Electrodes (pads placed on the person who has suffered a cardiac arrest) need to be replaced every two years. The expiry date of the electrodes can be seen by looking at an easily identifiable panel on the outside of the AED. The AED therefore needs minimum maintenance but needs someone to inspect it regularly for the above.

Q. Are there any legal or insurance implications?

A. There are no legal or insurance risks associated with using a defibrillator. There have been no cases of anyone being sued in the UK and no instances of claims from people receiving poor first aid attention in the UK; this is a health and safety myth.

Q. Can I get it wrong?

A. Defibrillators are reliable and safe and will not allow a shock to be delivered unless the heart's rhythm requires it. They are therefore extremely unlikely to do any harm to a person who has a suspected sudden cardiac arrest. You cannot worsen the casualty's condition and the AED cannot make the situation worse than it is. For further information on the legal status for those that attempt resuscitation see the Resus Council's document "A Guide to AEDs".

Q. Are they safe for the operator to use?

A. They are safe and present minimal risk of a rescuer receiving a shock. AEDs are extremely safe when used properly. The electric shock is programmed to go from one electrode pad to the other through the victim's chest. Basic precautions, such as verbally warning others to stand clear and visually.

For more
information



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