



Workplace Solutions

A turnkey approach to AED program management

Question: If I purchase an AED for my facility, is that enough to reduce liability and make my employees feel safe?

Responding is David Fritzsche, a vice president of Defibtech, Guilford, CT, and Tom Gruber, marketing manager, Cintas First Aid & Safety, Mason, OH.

Answer: AEDs resuscitate victims of sudden cardiac arrest, which kills more than 400,000 Americans each year. Many health and safety organizations such as OSHA endorse AEDs in workplaces and public facilities, and the devices continue to become more commonplace due to affordability and Good Samaritan laws.

An AED in your facility will decrease liability and improve emergency response time. Experts estimate that 70 percent of SCA victims survive when defibrillated within one to two minutes after arrest; only 5 percent live if defibrillation is delayed for more than 10 minutes. Studies show that response time to out-of-hospital cardiac arrest still exceeds 10 minutes. With each minute that passes, the chance of survival decreases by 10 percent.

A new concept in the AED industry, the turnkey AED management program, links all participants (manufacturer, medical director, facility safety manager, local EMS, etc.) in one integrated effort, which improves response time and lessens the chance of error. These five components provide an automated system of checks and balances that keeps program participants well-informed and accountable to each other:

1. A high-quality, easy-to-use AED. The goal of an AED program is to deliver defibrillation to an SCA victim within three minutes of cardiac arrest. An AED that features speed, reliability and high visibility will increase your team's confidence and will allow properly trained individuals in your facility to come to the aid of a victim faster than an EMS team.

2. Medical oversight and direction. The physician serves as your medical director and makes sure your AED program's policies and procedures meet all federal and state regulations. The physician's duties include consultation on who is trained, how the training is conducted, how the program is tracked and maintained, and where AEDs are placed. Physicians can supervise a site survey that measures response times and accounts for a variety of physical barriers.

3. Web-enabled tracking and maintenance. A turnkey program offers Web-enabled tracking, keeping participants well-informed and accountable to one another. The software places all vital program information online, including the location of the AEDs, maintenance checklists and training information. Automatic e-mails remind program managers to perform timely maintenance and training.

4. Standardized AED/CPR. Training and communication about AEDs, CPR and SCA will turn your facility's employees into an effective and confident team. Organizations are held liable for negligence in an SCA event when an AED is not available or does not work, or when employees are not aware that an AED is available. To decide how many employees to train in AED and CPR response, analyze your budget and your facility's SCA risk.

5. Continual program evaluation and improvement. After each use of an AED in an emergency situation, you should make sure the device's used pads and other accessories are replaced. After the event, the medical director will schedule a briefing with the individuals who participated in and witnessed the response to review the event in detail. Your facility's team should meet periodically to discuss how the program can be improved and to conduct practice drills with local EMS to help fine-tune the program.

Through a turnkey AED management program that includes high-quality AEDs, Web-enabled tracking and maintenance, responder training, and continual improvement, your program will achieve its intended result – saving lives.

