

# Kent County Sheriff's Dept. cruisers outfitted with AEDs

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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) — Every Kent County Sheriff's Department cruiser is now equipped with a tool credited with increasing cardiac arrest survival rates.

As of two weeks ago, each patrol car has an automatic external defibrillator — more commonly known as an AED — thanks to a \$72,000 federal grant.

The devices use a powerful jolt of electricity to shock a heart back into its normal rhythm during cardiac arrest.

"We're very excited about it. It improves somebody's chances of living through one of these episodes by 73 percent, so obviously as another service to our citizens to be there at the right moment when somebody has the right need, it's what we're hoping for," Undersheriff Michelle Young said.

It's an initiative the sheriff's department has been working on for the last five to seven years. One of the main stumbling blocks was the money. AEDs aren't cheap, with each one costing roughly \$1,200.

Young said buying AEDs came after funding the department's mandatory and auxiliary functions. She said AEDs are not part of mandatory functions because the department's primary role isn't medical first response.

But the AEDs make deputies prepared to be part of a multiagency effort to save lives.

"You'd be rehearsing your CPR, you'd sort of know that the only thing you could do for that person were chest compressions and rescue breaths until additional medical arrived on scene," Sgt. Joel Roon said. "The AEDs now gives us the ability to respond in sort of a primary function. With an AED, it instills some confidence in the officer who's responding to be able to help that much more."

The battery life on the AEDs is up to seven years, which gives the sheriff's department time to work out how to pay for replacements.

American Medical Response, one of West Michigan's ambulance services, trains a variety of groups on CPR and defibrillation using a mannequin that breaths and responds like a human.

"When it comes to AEDs in police cars, we're very supportive of that because the more the merrier," EMT-P and AMR Operations Manager Chad Crook said

He said that when more people are trained and have access to the devices, more lives are saved.

"Firefighters — they're all carrying it, they're all trained. Police officers, I mean, you see videos of them on YouTube all the time of police officers pulling up on scenes, getting out their equipment and going to work right away before EMS guys get there," Crook said.

In 2015, according to the Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival, the national average for cardiac survival rates was about 10 percent. In Kent County, the percentage was in line with the national average at roughly 10 percent of 443 cardiac arrests.

The money for the sheriff's department's AEDs came from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program through the Office of Justice Programs. That program provides funding to state and local municipalities for law enforcement, prosecution, indigent defense, courts, crime prevention and education, as well as various other resources including drug prevention and victims and witness services.

