

# EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AED) IN HOTELS

## Managing Hospitality Risk

### WHAT'S AT RISK?

Annually, in the US, over 175,000 people suffer Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCD) outside a hospital setting. SCD occurs suddenly and without warning and may affect anyone, even the young and healthy. More than 95% of SCD victims die. SCD occurs most commonly due to an electrical conduction abnormality in the heart resulting in an irregular heart rhythm called Ventricular Fibrillation [VF].

Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are small, portable devices FDA approved for lay public use, to counteract the effects of SCD through the discharge of an electrical shock which allows the normal heart rhythm to regenerate. If CPR is performed immediately and defibrillation initiated within 1-2 minutes, the survival rate may approach 70-80%. For each minute delay in defibrillation, the survival rate decreases by 7-10%.

### WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS?

Most hotels are not obligated by law to provide AEDs, either for their guests or their employees. About 10 states now require AEDs in health clubs, but hotel fitness centers are generally excluded, except in Massachusetts. The state of New York now requires an AED in any building that has a meeting room, banquet facility or ballroom with a capacity of 1,000 or more.

Many hotel operators worry that if they have the devices they could be sued for failing to have enough units, failing to put them in the right places, or failing



to replace batteries or maintain them properly. Another concern is hotel worker training and application. AED advocates argue that the growing trend toward AED programs may eventually increase liability for companies and facilities not prepared to respond appropriately to a cardiac emergency.

When assessing legal risk it is important for your organization to consult with your own legal advisors. The balance of this Bulletin assumes that a hotel has made a choice to use AED, and addresses some of the risks and controls you should know about.

### HOW CAN YOU BETTER PROTECT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

For some suggestions designed to assist you in developing sound policies and procedures for yourself and your organization, please turn this document over and review the attached checklist.

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For more information about this and other hospitality risk management topics, please contact:

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# Checklist: Proper Use of AEDs in Hotels

- When assessing legal risk, consult with your legal advisors. Information available from The Public Health Improvement Act, The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, The American Heart Association, and Emergency Care Research Institute (ECRI) may be used in assessing liabilities associated with AED use.
- Train designated rescuers in CPR and how to use an AED. Anyone expected to use an AED should be trained in its use, and in CPR.
- The American Heart Association has developed the Heartsaver AED course, which is available through Community Training Centers in most cities.
- Have physician oversight to help ensure quality control. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) requires a physician's prescription to buy an AED. The American Heart Association recommends further physician involvement to provide medical oversight of the program and to help ensure the program's safety and effectiveness.
- Integrate with the local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. Before establishing a program, check with your local EMS system to determine the requirements that may apply. In some states requirements might include an application and filing a facility's plan to respond to a cardiac emergency.
- The local EMS needs to know where AEDs are placed in a facility. The public dispatch office may be able to add the AEDs location to their 9-1-1 computer screen.
- Use and maintain AEDs according to the manufacturer's specifications. All AEDs work in a similar fashion, however, it's important for users to be trained to use their specific device the way it is intended to be used.
- AEDs require fairly low upkeep, but regularly scheduled maintenance will ensure their "readiness" in the event of an emergency. Reviewing the manufacturer's maintenance agreement will provide more information on maintenance requirements.
- When buying AEDs for your hotel, contact the manufacturers' representatives and ask for more information about the AEDs in which you're interested. For each device that seems to meet your needs, ask a sales representative to meet with you to demonstrate the device, give more information and answer questions.
- Prepare your questions for your visit with the representative. Be sure to review in detail with the representative each of the features listed, plus information such as warranties, service contracts, liability coverage, etc.
- Place AEDs in central locations near a telephone where they can be easily accessed.
- Place AEDs so any victim can be reached in less than three minutes.
- Place AEDs close to the person(s) trained to respond to an emergency.
- Notify all hotel personnel of AED locations.
- When placing AEDs, consider whether trained rescuers will have to use more than one elevator. If so, locating AEDs at different levels may make access more convenient.