

The list of possible medical emergencies you can experience in life is a long one. A common medical emergency that takes the lives of many people are emergencies that involve the heart. Last week we discussed that heart attacks are extremely common; and over 735,000 Americans experience a heart attack each year. A heart attack is the death of the muscle of the heart. It's caused by a loss of the blood supply to that part of the heart, and you typically have symptoms leading to the attack.

Another medical emergency involving the heart is Sudden Cardiac Arrest. An SCA is different than a heart attack since the heart suddenly stops beating altogether whereas blood can still flow during a heart attack. Sudden cardiac arrest is an issue involving the electrical impulses of the heart. Essentially, the lower chambers of the heart suddenly become chaotic, causing the heart to stop pumping blood, unless the heart returns to a normal rhythm, death can occur in minutes. Additionally, SCA's are not predictable, they can strike anyone, anytime and anywhere.

According to the American Red Cross, the AHA and ASHI, there are 4 critical steps in the chain of survival that should be used to treat an SCA, they are:

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

All these steps increase a victim's survival rate, but defibrillation is seen as the most critical step.

What is defibrillation? It is an external electrical current that "resets" and returns an irregular heartbeat to a normal rhythm. Defibrillation is most successful when done within 4 minutes of the collapse. The tool we have available to maximize those odds is the Automated External Defibrillator or AED.

While proper training in CPR and AED management are two crucial parts of successfully helping someone survive an SCA, today's AEDs can be used by someone with little to no training. Whereas there are instructions for pad placement and the rescuer(s) are guided by voice-prompts including when it is safe to touch the patient, when to continue CPR and when a shock is advised. AEDs are often the only chance that a victim of sudden cardiac arrest will survive.

Remember This!

Studies have shown that if defibrillated within the first minute of collapse, the victim's chances for survival are close to 90%. For every minute that defibrillation is delayed, survival decreases by 7 to 10%. If it is delayed by more than 10 minutes, the chance of survival in adults is less than 5%.



Tool Box Talk/Safety Meeting Sign In Sheet

Energy Efficiency Specialists™

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Topic: _____ Date: _____

Discussion Leader: _____ Job Name: _____

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Employee Comments, Concerns, Suggestions or Recommendations to improve workplace safety & health:

Please submit this document immediately upon completion of the meeting to the safety department and retain the original copy of this document in the Safety & Risk Management Plan.