



Is your hotel “heart safe”?

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article is copyrighted by *The Rooms Chronicle* and may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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New Year’s Eve at the Radisson Hotel in Cambridge, Mass., was an elegant affair. The food was superb, the band was playing a lively tune, and people were having a very good time. Suddenly, an elderly gentleman clutched his chest and went into full cardiac arrest on the dance floor. Luckily for the guest and his family, the hotel had had the foresight to install an automated external defibrillator. The guest was defibrillated in a timely manner and lived to tell about his harrowing experience.

Less fortunate was 33-year-old St. Louis Cardinal pitcher Daryl Kile. Kile, a professional athlete with no history of prior medical illness, was found dead of sudden cardiac arrest in his hotel room in Chicago after not showing up for practice.

Automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, hit the news again recently with the Carlson Hotel chain’s announcement in September that it plans to install AEDs at all of its U.S. owned and managed hotels. Though AEDs are proven lifesaving devices and their use has been shown to be highly effective in a variety of settings, they are less prevalent in the hospitality industry than would be expected.

This would not be such a problem if cardiac arrest was a rare occurrence. However, it is *the* leading cause of death in the United States, striking well over an estimated 250,000 Americans each year. According to the American Heart Association, of the estimated 250,000 people in the United States who suffer cardiac arrest outside a hospital each year, only about 5 percent live. Many casinos, airports and airplanes now have AEDs, and where they have been deployed, cardiac arrest survival rates have risen from near zero to well over 50 percent. For example, employees of Harrah’s Hotel and Casino have saved nearly 200 lives by using AEDs in emergency situations.

What causes SCA?

Cardiac arrest usually results from some underlying form of heart disease. Many victims, however, had no symptoms or awareness of any pre-existing cardiac condition. Most cardiac arrests are due to abnormal heart rhythms called arrhythmias. When sudden cardiac arrest occurs, the heart’s pumping action stops abruptly. The victim loses consciousness, loses their pulse, and stops breathing. Death can follow within minutes. Most often, SCA is due to a chaotic rhythm, known as ventricular fibrillation. The only effective treatment for ventricular fibrillation is defibrillation. CPR alone is not enough. Defibrillators give an electrical shock that stops the ventricular fibrillation and allows restoration of the heart’s normal rhythm.

Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, at any age. People have been stricken while eating lunch or watching TV, but stress, both physical and mental, makes sudden cardiac arrest more likely. Statistically speaking, the risk of a cardiac arrest happening *in a hotel or restaurant* is not at all negligible. SCA incidents in hotels receive considerable publicity as evidenced by numerous news reports on the subject.

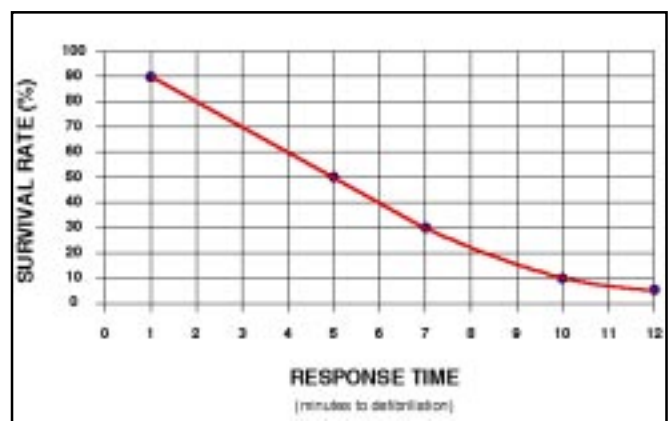
What are AEDs?

Most people have probably seen defibrillators on TV, where the physician holds two paddles on the victim’s chest and yells “clear” before delivering a shock. With advances in technology, it has become possible to make these devices smaller, lighter, and easier to use.

Today’s automated external defibrillators are computerized versions of that familiar hospital defibrillator. However, instead of requiring a physician to determine that the victim is in cardiac arrest and needs to be defibrillated, the AED checks automatically. Once the pads are placed on the patient’s chest and the device is turned on, the AED uses a built-in heart rhythm analyzer. The device will deliver a shock to a patient only if the patient is, in fact, in ventricular fibrillation. This makes the use of these lifesaving devices very simple and very safe.

So simple, in fact, that AEDs are literally “easy enough for a child to use.” The October 1999 issue of *Circulation*, the peer-reviewed journal of the American Heart Association, published a study of sixth-grade

Fig. 1 – Pictured below: SCA Survival Rates vs. Time to Defibrillation



students which showed that, after only one minute of instruction, it took these young children only about 30 seconds longer than a trained professional to deliver a shock using an AED. As a result many schools are now teaching students this basic lifesaving skill.

Once the AED determines the person is in ventricular fibrillation, it instructs the operator (verbally and with text messages) to push a button and deliver the shock. A shock delivered within two minutes of cardiac arrest will likely be successful at restoring circulation in nearly 75 percent of all victims. Every minute that goes by decreases the chance of success by 10 percent. At five minutes, the chance of survival is 50 percent. At seven or eight minutes, survival is less than 20 percent, and, at 10 minutes, there is virtually no hope of saving the patient. (See Fig. 1).

AEDs in the hospitality industry

The United States EMS system is the best in the world, yet, the average survival rate of cardiac arrest victims in the United States today is less than 5 percent. These dismal results are largely due to the long delays in the application of AEDs. In order to improve sudden cardiac arrest survival rates across the United States, President Bill Clinton in 2000 called for the devices to be placed in all federal buildings and in all U.S. airline planes within three years. Today, these lifesaving devices are no longer used exclusively by paramedics, firefighters and police officers, and they are now found on airplanes, golf courses, and at sporting arenas — and even at some forward-thinking hotels and resorts:

The Westin Alyeska Prince Hotel & Resort in Girdwood, Alaska, for example, purchased two AEDs in 1997. In June 1998, one of these devices saved the life of Jack B., a hotel guest visiting from Arizona, who collapsed in a corridor. A bellman began CPR, and, within three minutes, security had arrived with the defibrillator and successfully defibrillated Jack. He was the first known guest in Girdwood's history to experience an SCA.

Disney implemented one of the nation's largest corporate automated external defibrillator programs. The company has installed 500 AEDs at Walt Disney World, Orlando, Fla.; Disneyland, Anaheim, Calif.; on the Disney Cruise Line ships; and on Disney's private island, Castaway Cay.

This past September, Carlson Hotels announced it would follow Disney's lead and install AEDs in all of its owned and managed U.S. hotels. In addition, Carlson is encouraging its licensed and franchised hotel owners to install devices at their properties. This includes its five hotel brands: Regent International hotels, Radisson Hotels & Resorts, Park Plaza Hotels and Resorts, Country Inns & Suites and its Park Inn hotels.

"AEDs have become so easy to use that we feel it simply makes sense to install them at as many of our hotels as possible to further ensure the safety of our hotel guests and employees," said Trudy Rautio, president of Carlson Hotels Worldwide in the Americas. "By installing AEDs at our owned and managed hotels, we hope our franchisees will follow our lead and join in the installation of AEDs at our other hotel properties to help increase survival for our guests who are struck by SCA while visiting our hotels. Before the AED installation, there was nothing we could do for a cardiac arrest victim until emergency services arrived. Now we have the equipment to, hopefully, make the difference between life and death."

Hotels and catering facilities, conference and convention centers, and all places that have large public areas are important locations for AEDs. Protecting wedding guests, conference attendees, diners in large restaurants, and users of a hotel's fitness facilities, golf courses and pools, should be a priority.

Hospitality employees are also protected by AEDs, and that's no small matter. Employees spend much more time in the hotel where they work than any individual guest. In addition, some of the predictive causes of cardiac arrest (electrical shocks, physical labor, stress) can be job related. OSHA has recently recommended that employers install AEDs. ✧

In the next issue of TRC

- Read about how to implement an AED program in a hotel and at the same time increase guest protection and minimize hotel liability potential.

(Jacqueline Emery is director of marketing at Access CardioSystems in Concord, Mass. Access CardioSystems makes the smallest, lightest and most cost-effective automated external defibrillator available on the market today. Access CardioSystems can be reached at 978-371-4985, or toll-free at 1-866-238-3631 or www.accesscardiosystems.com)

Pictured below: Today's lifesaving AEDs, such as this one from Access CardioSystems which weighs in at 2.8 lbs. and a mere 7.3" by 4.3", come compact enough to literally fit in the palm of one's hand.

