



Risk Management

by Jacqueline Emery

Implementing an AED program in your hotel

*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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It's a proven fact, automated external defibrillators save lives. As explained in the January/February 2004 issue of *The Rooms Chronicle*, about 250,000 Americans die each year from sudden cardiac arrest. That's 600 people a day or an average of 25 people each hour.

When an individual experiences ventricular fibrillation, the cause of most instances of SCA, the only effective treatment is defibrillation. Defibrillation shocks the heart and allows restoration of the heart's normal rhythm. AEDs in hotels can and do save lives. Yet, most properties have been reticent to acquire and install them. And this makes little sense.

Acquisition cost

An AED program tailored to the needs of the lodging industry can be implemented without being costly or burdensome. The average AED with cabinet, case, and basic accessories costs about \$3,500, but some companies offer AEDs that are much lighter and smaller for around \$1,700. AEDs have minimal upkeep costs and most test themselves daily, but all manufacturers recommend that each defibrillator's status indicator be checked on a daily basis.

Quantity and location

The first step is for the hotel to assess its layout in order to determine how many AEDs might be needed and where they should be located. An American Heart Association recommendation states that responders should be able to reach the victim, call 9-1-1, begin CPR and apply an AED within three minutes. This is known as the "drop to shock" interval.

AEDs should be located in highly visible and accessible places. For hotels and resorts, appropriate locations would typically include the lobby, fitness center and pool area, golf courses and tennis court area, and near banquet/exhibit halls and F&B outlets. Distance to the nearest AED is a critical factor when determining the number of AEDs to acquire and their placement throughout the property. If a responder cannot locate, access and apply the AED within three minutes, the chance of survival greatly diminishes. For every minute after the onset of sudden cardiac arrest, the chance of survival decreases by ten percent.



Pictured left:
AEDs, such as
this one from
A c c e s s
CardioSystems, are a
compact, portable, and
proven tool for saving lives
due to sudden cardiac arrest.

Training

While AEDs are automated in nature and application of the defibrillator is relatively simple, the hotel should identify its team of emergency responders in advance, and provide employee training in CPR, first aid and AED use. Wherever possible, include managers and hourly employees from various departments and shifts to ensure broad coverage. If training is limited to security personnel, the hotel may compromise either the safety environment of the property or its ability to respond to multiple incidents simultaneously. Security officers cannot be everywhere at once, and it may take them longer to respond to a “Guest Down” situation than another trained employee who is already in the immediate area.

Most AED manufacturers or their retailers have the ability to train employees in the proper use of AEDs. Both the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross offer CPR courses that incorporate AED training. These courses can be offered in the workplace and typically last 3.5 - 4.5 hours in duration.

Acquisition

Because AEDs are medical devices controlled by the Food & Drug Administration, it will be necessary to obtain a prescription from a physician in order to purchase an AED. Once the defibrillators have been installed, an AED implementation program is required which involves medical-oversight, maintenance, record keeping and employee training. This can be fully outsourced or done internally by the hotel. Most AED vendors offer so-called “turnkey programs” that will provide these services and take care of all the logistics for the hotel.

Liability

Whether or not a liability exists for not having an AED is something each hotel should discuss with its corporate risk management group and insurance carrier. However, in the last five years several large payments were made to settle lawsuits against Lufthansa, United Airlines and Busch Gardens for *not* having defibrillators. With AEDs now installed at airports, large shopping malls and all federal government buildings, AEDs are rapidly becoming the “standard of care.” The installation of AEDs is mandatory in the hospitality industry in New York City. The American Heart Association recommends that all locations with exercise facilities of any kind establish AED programs.

Despite apparent risk-mitigating opportunities, many hoteliers concerned about potential liability choose to wait for a substantial loss or high-profile lawsuit involving another hotel before opting to acquire AEDs and seek training for their employees. But hotels that do implement AED programs are afforded protections for their efforts.

When former president Bill Clinton signed the Cardiac Arrest Survival Act on November 13, 2000, “Good Samaritan” protection was extended to *both* AED users *and* the acquirers of the devices in those states that do not currently have AED Good Samaritan Laws. This protection will help encourage not only laypersons to respond in a cardiac emergency by using an AED, but also corporations to make them available on their premises. The American Heart Association has been a long time proponent of Public Access Defibrillation programs. Of course the greatest motivation for establishing an AED program is the ability to prevent unnecessary deaths.

Summary

As prices for automated external defibrillators are coming down, the purchase and installation of this critical live-saving piece of equipment might actually be both a sound business decision and make good economic sense. A hotel that installs AEDs at its facilities can rest easier knowing that it has the ability to provide an immediate response to guests who suffer from sudden cardiac arrest. From a marketing viewpoint, the installation of AEDs can be touted as both an amenity for customer concern and a competitive advantage to be claimed by organizations that market themselves as “heart-healthy hotels” and “rapid-response resorts.”

(Jacqueline Emery is director of marketing at Access CardioSystems in Concord, MA. Access CardioSystems makes the smallest, lightest and most cost-effective automated external defibrillator available on the market today. Access CardioSystems can be reached at 978-371-1057 or www.accesscardiosystems.com.)