

Golf and country club safety solutions

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Automated External Defibrillators

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) have become a common sight throughout the country. Public buildings or facilities frequented by pedestrians often display these devices in hallways. If the AED is not displayed, there is a good chance it is on the property at a designated location. Golf and country clubs and resorts are no exception.

This newsletter will address best practices for clubs that either plan to install or already have installed AEDs. Obviously, all federal, state and local laws should be reviewed prior to installation. Additionally, installing these life-saving devices is a small part of the overall program that needs to be in place. The following outlines the key elements of an AED program.

Introduction

According to the Heart Rhythm Foundation, more than 325,000 Americans die from sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) each year. This is the leading cause of death in the US each year., Brain death and permanent death start to occur in just four to six minutes of SCA. A victim's chances of survival are reduced 7-10 percent every minute that passes without treatment.

According to medical experts, the key to survival is timely initiation of a "chain of survival," including CPR and early defibrillation.

"Chain of survival" means:

- Early access to medical care (EMS and 911 notification)
- Early CPR
- Early defibrillation
- Early institution of Advanced Life Support

Early defibrillation means having immediate access to a properly working AED. Where defibrillation is provided within five to seven minutes, the survival rate from cardiac arrest is as high as 49 percent.²



Footnotes:

¹ <http://www.heartrhythmfoundation.org/facts/scd.asp>

² Risktopic, "Automated External Defibrillators"

Legal issues

A search on the internet will provide good insight into the legal issues involved with AED programs. Other pertinent resources are your local EMS services and/or companies that sell these units. For the most part, adhering to these laws is less of a criminal concern and more of a liability negligence issue.

On November 13, 2000 the federal "Cardiac Arrest Survival Act," H.R.2498, was enacted regarding the placement of AEDs in federal buildings and providing civil immunity for authorized users. It instructed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make recommendations to promote public access to defibrillation programs in federal buildings and other public buildings across the country. The Act extended Good Samaritan protections to AED users and the acquirers of the devices in those states that did not have AED Good Samaritan protections. The act stipulates that if a Good Samaritan, property owner, or renter acts in good faith to purchase and use an AED to save a life, the law will provide protection from lawsuits.

As a result of the Federal law, by the end of 2001, most states had included provisions for AEDs in their Good Samaritan laws. Good Samaritan laws protect people from legal liability for any harm caused when helping individuals in need. Good Samaritan legislation typically identifies two separate classes of people:

- Those who own AEDs •

Those who use AEDs

Once again, this article is not meant to address the federal, state and local laws governing AED programs. Regardless of Good Samaritan laws, owners and users of AEDs should implement a formal program. Requirements of these programs should include device selection, training, and equipment maintenance with documentation. These are the essential elements of a golf and country club's AED program.

Program elements

A written AED program should be drafted by a club's safety committee or management group. The program should outline the various aspects of the plan including but not limited to number of devices, training, maintenance, etc. A club should use of all the resources available (e.g. local EMT's, medical physician of the resort, AED Sales Personnel, insurance companies, etc.) when developing your program.

Type and number of devices

AEDs must be approved by the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) to perform the job they are designed to do. Features common to most AEDs are ease of use (voice and visual commands), use of biphasic wave form (compared to earlier monophasic systems), perform electronic self-tests, and have adequate warranty periods. The cost of AEDs will range from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Consumers should consider affordability, comfort in use and long-term cost (e.g. battery longevity, etc).

The number of AEDs and placement of these devices will depend on a number of factors. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends a maximum five-minute response time to medical emergencies that appear to be cardiac arrests. It is an easy decision to place AEDs within a clubhouse such as the proshop or similar location that is manned throughout most of the day. Fitness centers should have an AED on hand and are required in many states. Other locations such as near the swimming pool/spa, tennis complex and guard/attendant station may also make sense.

The greater consideration for golf course operators is how to provide defibrillators in a large property setting. Several options in providing remote support to "people in need" may include installing AEDs on ranger/golf attendant carts, beverage carts and/or at the golf maintenance facility. Of course, on-demand communications via cell phone or radio devices is necessary. Clubs have also placed these devices within cabinets at comfort stations with monitoring controls that signal when the device has been moved.



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Training

The training element of a club's AED program may be governed by state requirements. Inadequate training of a club's staff may lead to liability negligence thus result in a large insurance claim if an undesirable event occurs. The training of staff members is essential and should not be ignored.

A good AED training program will require staff members to undergo first aid, CPR and AED training. Many suppliers of the life saving devices will provide this training at a reduced cost. Common steps to follow:

- Determine who will be trained to use the AEDs
- Several suggestions should include security personnel, clubhouse personnel, golf attendants/rangers and tennis/fitness instructors
- Provide a list of trained personnel with effective/renewal training dates displayed by each name

Develop communications and deployment program

Once an incident is reported, the club's notification protocol should be initiated (e.g. call 911, notify security and/or AED location contact, etc.). The club should issue rescue/deployment procedures. Develop a plan, in conjunction with local EMS, to access all areas of the club, golf course, etc. Special equipment may be necessary to carry golfers from course locations that EMS vehicles cannot access. Once the incident has ended, a comprehensive incident report should be completed and reviewed by the safety committee and/or management staff.

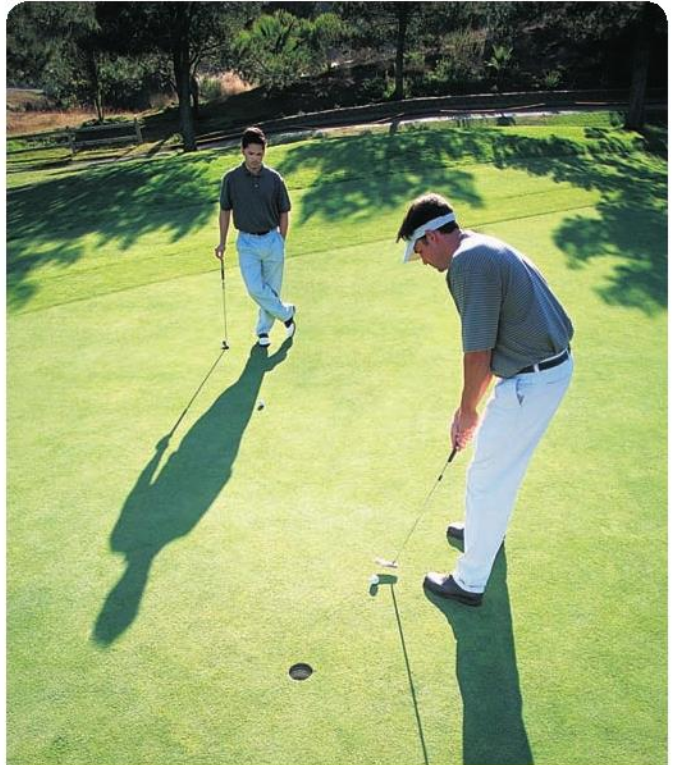
Maintenance

As with most equipment, the reliability of AEDs will depend on the maintenance programs in place. Although a quality AED should be mostly maintenance free, the user must assure the battery is charged. Some dealers may offer on-site visits to calibrate or test shock the device; however, this is not necessary for quality equipment.

A sound AED maintenance program will use the manufacturer's recommended guidelines. Daily, weekly and/or monthly inspections will increase the probability that the unit is in place, charged and ready for use. The AED's batteries and electrode pads will have expiration dates that should be monitored. All inspections and testing should be documented for future reference.

Summary

There are a number of reasons why clubs consider implementing AED programs. In today's world, it is more common for club owners to have AEDs than not. Many of these clubs will have success stories that saved a member or guest's life.



*Country clubs and resorts that ultimately do implement an AED program demonstrate that they **truly care** about the health of their employees, their members and their guests.*

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