

# (((ASK RUSS)))

## What do facility managers need to know about Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)?

According to the American Heart Association in 2013, there were 359,400 incidents of Sudden Cardiac Arrest in the U.S. This was down from 382,800 in 2012. Unfortunately, the survival rate in 2013 dropped to 9.5% from 11.4% in 2012.

A Johns Hopkins study of more than 13,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, showed that the survival rate from sudden cardiac arrest increases to approximately 38 percent when victims receive AED treatment before Emergency Medical Services arrive.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest can happen to anyone at any time. This puts public assembly facilities on center stage in mass gatherings.

Time is critical with Sudden Cardiac Arrest. According to the American Red Cross, the average response time in the U.S. for first responders once 911 is called ranges from 8-12 minutes. For each minute defibrillation is

delayed, the chance of survival is reduced approximately 10 percent.

Facility operators and managers have a valuable tool in portable AEDs. Challenges for public assembly facility operators do exist with the price of the units and the reasonable number necessary to provide coverage throughout the facility or complex. Fortunately the costs for these devices, once over \$3,000, is now down to around \$1,000.

An Automated External Defibrillator is a lightweight, portable device that delivers an electric shock through the chest to the heart. Currently, AEDs are the only effective treatment for restoring a regular heart rhythm during sudden cardiac arrest outside of a hospital environment.

Modern AEDs are designed to be simple to use, even by untrained by-standers, through simple visual and audio commands directed by the device itself. Most of today's First Aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) classes are including AED training to first responders.

As with generally all "good faith" efforts to render aid, AED use is covered by individual states "Good Samaritan" laws. There is, however, legislation in many states that addresses AED requirements and use. It is always the individual facility operator and manager's responsibility to verify the code or regulation through which they are covered.

I discovered a web site where you can click on your state and get information on mandates, required training and registration regulations.

[www.sca-aware.org/aed-laws](http://www.sca-aware.org/aed-laws)

Terri Knight, senior operations manager at the Memphis (Tenn.) Cook Convention Center,



shared with me that the senior staff of the MCCC was discussing AEDs and how to incorporate this life saving technology into the facility back in 2009. After that discussion, she began researching the devices, manufacturers and prices. What she found was that while they were available, they were very expensive.

She then reached out to the Memphis Fire Department to see what resources they might have and discovered that they had a program with a goal to place an AED in every city and county building and were glad to provide the MCCC with a device.

When they came to the center, the problem they faced was obvious. The MCCC was an over 500,000-sq.-ft. building, stretching over several city blocks. Everyone knew this facility had to be looked at differently.

It was eventually decided that it would take three devices to provide appropriate coverage. One device was placed in the 2,000-seat Cannon Center Theater located at the southern end of the facility. A second device was placed in the second floor foyer with access to the ballrooms, meeting rooms and the main hall.

The last device was placed on the lower level in the security office, with direct access to meeting rooms and the grand lobby.

The battery life of the devices soon became an issue. The first devices that were installed had a very short and uneven battery life. This concern was shared with the MFD,

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and they returned to replace the original devices with new ones that had a proven, longer lasting battery life.

It is the facility's responsibility to check the bat-

teries on a regular basis and Terri has created a check list to verify it has been done. In the agreement with the MFD, they will return and replace the batteries when the battery life gets low.

Not every facility is as fortunate as the

Memphis Cook Convention Center, both in their relationship with the fire department and in the fact that their fire department has an AED program for public buildings. However, there is some good news. There are several similar programs throughout the U.S., and I encourage facility managers to investigate what resources may be available to them locally. I did find a program called AEDGrant. AEDGrant is a corporate buy-down grant program funded by generous donations, corporate backing, and AED manufacturer sponsors. The program has changed many times since its inception from a single manufacturer program to the current program backed by AED & CPR training organizations and the AED Manufacturers themselves.

[www.aedgrant.com/about-aed-grant.htm](http://www.aedgrant.com/about-aed-grant.htm)

There is right now a new twist to the AED story. In a case before the California Supreme Court, the question is being asked, "what can happen if an organization doesn't have an AED?"

In what circumstances is it in the duty of a commercial property owner to provide emergency first aid to invitees and/or guests that requires the availability of an AED for cases of sudden cardiac arrest?

The consequences of going without AEDs in the future may involve civil lawsuits, if a visitor dies from sudden cardiac arrest, or results in a worker's compensation claim in the case of an employee. This decision could increase the liability risks for businesses that don't have AEDs. Public assembly facility managers should keep a close eye on this.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

AEDs are proven to save lives and should, in my opinion, be a part of every public assembly facility's standard equipment inventory. Be safe out there!

**RUSS SIMONS IS...**

managing partner, Venue Solutions Group, and has been in this industry for more than three decades, working in arenas, stadiums, design, construction, safety and security. Send questions about any aspect of venue operation to [askruss@venuestoday.com](mailto:askruss@venuestoday.com) or mail questions to Venues Today, P.O. Box 2540, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.

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