

# HEALTH & SAFETY

## Jump-Starting a Defibrillator Program

Each year, there are 325,000 victims of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), or ventricular fibrillation in this country, according to the Heart Rhythm Foundation. About 95 percent of them die before they reach a hospital, and some 10,000 of the fatalities occur at work. Without medical intervention, a victim will collapse, lose consciousness, and die.

Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) can dramatically improve survival rates of victims of sudden cardiac arrest. They work by electrically shocking a heart that is beating abnormally back to a normal rhythm. Employers are weighing the benefits of providing workplace AEDs.

Read on to learn what's involved and how investing in an AED could save a life at your place of business.

### Factors and Options

OSHA has produced fact sheets and other materials on AEDs and, at the request of the Office of Management and Budget, is currently reviewing survey data regarding AED use in occupational settings.

In its request for information, the agency acknowledged that the use of such equipment in establishments is cost-effective from a societal perspective."

The current cost of the units is approximately \$1200-\$3000 each. Additional expenses to consider are for training and administrative expenses.

Also note that, at present, a doctor's prescription is needed to purchase most AEDs. The prescription can be obtained from your on-site occupational health physician, or from a doctor at a clinic with which your business is associated. Philips is currently the only manufacturer of units (its *HeartStart Onsite* line for workplaces) that do not require prescriptions.

#### Q. *Why introduce an AED at work?*

- The possibility of sudden cardiac arrest on the job (among causes are heart attack, electrocution, or asphyxiation-for example, by inadequate oxygen in a confined space).
- Improved chances of survival because the devices can be used before emergency help arrives.
- AEDs are compact, lightweight, portable, safe, and easy to use, even by people without specialized training.

#### Q. *Where and how should you place the AED?*

Place the equipment:

- In a place that assumes response within 3-5 minutes of an event
- Where many employees are present, such as on production lines in office settings, and in company cafeterias
- Near confine spaces, where electric-powered equipment is in use, at outdoor worksites where lightning may strike, and in fitness centers
- At remote locations, such as construction worksites, utility installations, and on offshore drilling rigs.

#### Q. *What's involved in AED trainings?*

OSHA says it's easy to train workers to:

- Identify sudden cardiac arrest and notify emergency personnel
- Perform CPR, *and*
- Provide defibrillation with an AED.