

Charlotte County update for 4/6/16

AED registration can be a lifesaver

By Marianne Taylor, Charlotte County Public Safety director

Charlotte County Fire & EMS has created an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) registration program which provides both public and private facilities an opportunity to register the location of an AED with Charlotte County Fire & EMS.

Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, even in the absence of heart disease, and is a leading cause of death in the United States. Often caused by a lethal arrhythmia such as ventricular fibrillation, quick access to an AED, which delivers an electrical shock directly to the heart, can be a lifesaving action. According to the American Heart Association “a victim’s chance of survival decreases by 7 to 10 percent for every minute that passes without defibrillation.”

An AED is a computerized device that can analyze a victim’s heart rhythm and advise if a shock is needed. AEDs have evolved into smaller, user-friendly devices that use voice prompts to guide the user to deliver a life-saving shock. Many companies manufacture AEDs. Charlotte County Fire & EMS does not recommend any specific AED. The operation is very similar among the models and training to use the device is quick and easy.

Persons responsible for the use of an AED must be trained to recognize the signs of sudden cardiac arrest, know when to initiate the 911 system, and be trained in CPR. CPR is a critical action taken to aid the victim of cardiac arrest and, when performed alongside the AED, can increase survival between 50 and 80 percent. Once the AED is attached it will analyze the victim’s heart, advise when a shock is indicated and prompt the user to continue CPR. CPR helps to circulate oxygen-rich blood to the brain and is the second link in the American Heart Association Chain of Survival: early activation of the 911 system, early CPR, rapid defibrillation, Emergency Medical Services and post-arrest care.

Registration of an AED with Charlotte County Fire & EMS will provide valuable information to the 911 dispatcher, including the name and address of the organization, exact location of each AED on the premises and its availability. It allows for updates to information regarding existing or additional devices. This information can then be passed on to emergency responders as well as provided to persons who are on the scene with the victim. Additional information provided to Fire & EMS is the name and contact information of the AED site coordinator, that person who is designated as the “gatekeeper” for their AED.

Facilities with large gatherings of people or a population where there is a high risk of heart attack are encouraged to invest in an AED and the training of key people who will be available and willing when an emergency presents. On average, an automated external defibrillator can cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000 but prices vary by manufacturer.

The American Heart Association “supports placing AEDs in targeted public areas such as sports arenas, gated communities, office complexes, doctor’s offices, shopping malls, etc. When AEDs are placed in the community, business or facility, the AHA strongly encourages that they be part of a defibrillation program in which:

- Persons who acquire an AED notify the local EMS office. It is important for the local EMS system to know where AEDs are located in the community. In the event of a sudden cardiac arrest emergency, the 9-1-1 dispatcher will know if an AED is on the premises and will be able to notify the EMS system as well as the responders already on the scene.
- Persons responsible for using the AED are trained in CPR and how to use an AED. Early CPR is an integral part of providing lifesaving aid to people suffering sudden cardiac arrest. CPR helps to circulate oxygen-rich blood to the brain. After the AED is attached and delivers a shock, the typical AED will prompt the operator to continue CPR while the device continues to analyze the victim.”

For more information on the American Heart Association and AEDs:
www.heart.org/HEARTORG/

For questions regarding the AED registration program contact Charlotte County Fire & EMS
941-833-5600.

For AED registration forms and information, go to www.CharlotteCountyFL.com/Fire and click Charlotte County AED Location Form.

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