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Automated External Defibrillator and the Manitoba Fire Service

What is an Automated External Defibrillator (AED)?

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) can strike anywhere and at any time. It can happen to anyone; an employee in the workplace, a shopper in a mall, an athlete on the field, a spectator at an event, a traveler at an airport, a pedestrian on the street and even emergency first response personnel.

An AED is a small, portable and easy to use device that assesses the heart of a person in cardiac arrest for a shockable rhythm. If such a rhythm is detected, the provider is instructed to press a button to deliver a shock or series of shocks to the victim's heart, stopping the heart to allow it to return to a normal rhythm. If no shockable rhythm is detected, no shock can be delivered and the provider must perform CPR until professional help arrives.

Combined with CPR, the use of an AED may increase the likelihood of saving a person's life by 75% or more over CPR alone.

Who can use an AED?

Until recently, only medical and paramedical staff used AED's. However, the advent of safe and easy to use AED's now makes it possible to extend the use of AED's to people with little or no medical background. The training required is relatively brief and is usually delivered in conjunction with a CPR course. Verbal and other cues built into the machine itself also provide guidance when the device is used.

Who regulates the use of an AED?

In Manitoba, the use of AED's is not medically regulated. This means any citizen can use an AED to save a life. However, The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba does maintain a registry of organizations that maintain public access defibrillators. Registering your defibrillator program with the Foundation will allow you to obtain the latest information and guidelines as they become available.





What is an AED program?

It is recommended that any organization purchasing an AED notify their local EMS provider and participate in any local formalized AED program. If your organization is interested in starting an AED program or require more information, contact The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba. An AED program typically means making readily available an AED for general public access and use. The AED provider would look after purchasing, installing and maintaining the device. An AED provider does not provide any type of medical response system.

What is the role of an AED on the Municipal Fire Department?

In Manitoba, several fire departments are exploring the idea of adding an AED as an extension to the trauma kit that they normally carry for the treatment and safety of their own personnel. Some fire departments have already made this step. In the course of providing your normal fire/rescue response duties, should you come across a person requiring the intervention of a defibrillator, there is no legislation that would prevent you from using the device on that individual.

When does a fire department require to be licensed through Manitoba Health in order to provide an AED service?

The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act specifically states that:

License Required

- 2 *No person shall*
 - (a) *operate an emergency medical response system or a stretcher transportation service: or*
 - (b) *act as an emergency medical response technician, stretcher attendant or ambulance operator unless the person has a valid and subsisting license to do so issued under this Act.*

“emergency medical response system” means an undertaking which provides emergency medical response services, and includes the aircraft, vehicles, equipment, personnel, and administrative systems necessary for the provision of the emergency medical response services.





In order for a Fire Department to promote that they will provide *medical first response* to the general public as an emergency response agency to provide AED service, they must be licensed through Manitoba Health and be duly trained and qualified to do so. If the process involves calling 911, or contacting the fire department and having a fire department member accessing the machine on the person's behalf, you would be providing the "*perception*" that the fire department is providing "*medical first response*" and therefore would be required to be licensed for medical first response through Manitoba Health.

A fire department cannot promote to the public that it will provide AED medical first response by providing the response or being a part of the response with an AED without being licensed through Manitoba Health.

