

Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin



Automated External Defibrillators in the Workplace

Workplace Health and Safety supports the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) at the work site provided the employer ensures that AED use is integrated into the first aid program and emergency response plan at the site and can be safely used in the specific work environment intended.

Background

AEDs can be effective at improving survival from sudden cardiac arrest due to ventricular fibrillation when their use is incorporated into an emergency response system that includes early recognition of emergency, early notification and access of emergency medical services, early cardiopulmonary resuscitation, early defibrillation, and early advanced cardiac life support.

AEDs are approved for sale as medical devices by Health Canada, Medical Devices Bureau (MDB). They are regulated in Canada as medical devices. The manufacturer is required to license the AED. MDB imposes labelling requirements on these devices as required by the *Canadian Medical Devices Regulation*. Labels must state indications and conditions for AED use including a requirement that they are used only by properly qualified individuals. Labels must also include directions for the safe use of AEDs in the manner intended.

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The OHS Regulation (AR 62/2003), Section 13, requires that workers be competent or be under the supervision of a competent worker. A worker using an AED would have to be “adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience” to safely use the AED. AED training is a required component in the Advanced First Aid course. Other first aiders may use AED equipment if they receive training comparable to the training required on the use of AEDs that is part of Advanced First Aid.

If the first aider is under the supervision of a licensed medical practitioner, the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons has guidelines covering responsibilities of the medical practitioner.

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada has guidelines regarding AED use.

Recommendations

- (1) In considering authorizing the use of AEDs at a work site, an employer should ensure assessment of specific needs of the work site including;
 - whether AEDs can be safely used (e.g. not to be used in a flammable environment)
 - the population at risk - identify hazards of the workplace that increase risk of sudden cardiac arrest
 - existing emergency response and
 - availability of emergency medical services
- (2) The employer should ensure AEDs are integrated into the existing emergency response and First Aid programs.
- (3) Anyone using an AED must be competent therefore; the employer must ensure appropriate training in AEDs for equipment that is present at the worksite. There also must be a system to ensure update of skills and recertification.
- (4) The employer should ensure there is a quality assurance program in place that includes regular maintenance and inspection of equipment, record keeping and program evaluation.

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Occupational Health and Safety



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