



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



## Toolbox Talks

# What is an Automated External Defibrillator?

An automated **external defibrillator (AED)** is a lightweight, portable device that delivers an electric shock through the chest to the heart. The shock can potentially stop an irregular heart beat (arrhythmia) and allow a normal rhythm to resume following sudden cardiac arrest. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart malfunctions and stops beating unexpectedly. If not treated within minutes, it quickly leads to death.

### Why are AEDs important?

- AED's make it possible for more people to respond to medical emergencies.
- They are portable! This allows them to be used by nonmedical people.
- AED's are part of emergency response programs that also include rapid use of 9-1-1 and prompt delivery of CPR, which together are vital to improving survival from sudden cardiac arrest.

### How do AEDs work?

- The built-in computer checks a victim's heart rhythm through adhesive electrodes and calculates whether defibrillation is needed.
- If it is, a recorded voice prompts the rescuer to press the shock button on the AED. This shock momentarily stuns the heart and stops all activity, giving the heart the chance to resume beating effectively.

### Where should AED's be placed

- All first-response vehicles, including ambulances, law enforcement vehicles and many fire engines should have an AED.
- Public areas such as sports venues, shopping malls, airports, airplanes, businesses, convention centers, hotels, schools and doctors' offices.
- Near elevators, cafeterias, main reception areas, and on walls in main corridors.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### Who can use an AED?

AEDs are intended for use by the general public. Most AEDs use audible voice prompts to guide the user through the process.

#### Why is there a razor and scissors in the AED kit?

Body hair such as chest hair can interfere with the electrodes, so you may need to quickly shave the area. There are also scissors included to cut clothing off quickly.

### Discussion Questions:

- Do you know the location of an AED on our jobsite? Where is it?
- Do you feel like you could use an AED in case of an emergency? What other tools do you need to feel confident?