

WorkSafe

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Safety Spotlight

Film industry workers from Bridge Studios in Burnaby take part in an AED (automated external defibrillator) training exercise.



Action! On-site defibrillators offer split-second chances

By Andrew Tzembelicos

Beyond the lights and glamour of motion pictures and the performing arts, it's sometimes easy to forget production sets are worksites too. And just like at any workplace, heart attacks leading to cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, anytime.

The difference is that these worksites are usually short term temporary workplaces with project based work, where employers come and go. And, as required in other on the go workplaces found in such industries as construction, forestry, and

tourism, this means worker health and safety equipment needs to be mobile, too.

To recognize the importance of first aid in these workplaces, Actsafe the health and safety association for B.C.'s motion picture and performing arts industry has developed a program allowing members to temporarily rent out automated external defibrillators (AEDs). This not only creates a market for AEDs, but establishes them as a standard safety device in the workplace. And the program provides training, so industry workers know how to use them.

Why defibrillators are vital to first aid

- Cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in North America.
- For every minute that passes without treatment, survival odds decrease by 10 percent.
- When combined with effective CPR, AED use following cardiac arrest can double the chances of survival.

Source: The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada



Photo submitted by Actsafe

Portable defibrillators boost life-saving odds.

“By doing this, we can try to change workplace health and safety culture,” says Geoff Teoli, Actsafe’s executive director.

Defibrillators boost survival rates

Teoli says one of the main goals of the program is to make it easy and affordable to get AEDs onto worksites ensuring help is readily available in an emergency. And given that price is a typical barrier to AED use, Actsafe has been charging production a flat rate of \$79 per month to rent the device, versus the \$70 per day market standard.

In a cardiac arrest situation, every second counts. Picture this: an actress is delivering a key line on opening night when she suddenly collapses onstage. The audience goes numb. While the director jumps in to administer CPR, a fellow cast member races to activate emergency response procedures, get the AED, and administer a treatment to restore a regular heart beat. These trained crew members know they’re her only lifeline until medical help arrives.

It’s a fact: for every minute that passes without treatment in a cardiac situation, survival odds decrease by 10 percent, says Dan Westerby, WorkSafeBC manager of certification services. True safety in such circumstances means having the right equipment, emergency response procedures, and trained personnel.

“It’s great to have an AED on site, but it’s only effective if people know the machine is there and aren’t afraid to use it.”

— Garry Wilson
WorkSafeBC industry specialist

This is why one of the important services Actsafe includes in the program is training in the use of AEDs, as well as devices from a single provider. This means workers can move from production to production without needing new training. WorkSafeBC industry specialist Garry Wilson says the built in training is a major benefit. “It’s great to have an AED on site, but it’s only effective if people know the machine is there and aren’t afraid to use it,” he says.

Program provides emergency training

Beyond providing a quick medical response to workers in cardiac arrest, what makes Actsafe’s program stand out is the boost it provides to worker morale, and its potential applicability to other industries.

Westerby says workplaces with these programs speak volumes about an employer's commitment to health and safety on the job.

"An employer with an AED unit in the workplace, a program, and well-trained attendants is typically viewed by its employees as showing leadership in health and safety in the workplace."

Wilson would like to see AED rentals become standard practice. He points to other mobile worksites, such as those in construction, that could benefit from this type of program.

"As AEDs multiply, people become more comfortable with them and expect to see them — especially in their workplaces." They start asking key questions of their employers, he says, such as, "Do we have an AED?" and, "Who's trained to use one?"

Beyond the workplace, the program can also benefit surrounding communities.

"More people trained to use AEDs means more people trained in our communities, which can help save lives and lead to creating a safety culture."

Industry enthusiastic about AEDs

Teoli is excited about interest in the program, which saw its first rental on the set of *Night at the Museum 3*, a 20th Century Fox production currently being filmed in B.C.

What he's quickly finding, however, is that news is spreading quickly, and employers are just as interested in buying AEDs through Actsafe, with 11 devices sold in the first three months of the program. Teoli's hoping that by the end of the summer, every major film studio in the Lower Mainland will have an AED on site.

This is all good news to Teoli. He'd like B.C.'s film sets, production stages, and other industry workspaces to gain a reputation for being best prepared to deal with cardiac arrests on worksites.

Westerby says an AED rental and purchase program provides simple-but-vital gains for employers.

"By having more AEDs in the workplace, more workers are likely to go home at the end of the day." 🙏

Heart attack versus cardiac arrest

Heart attack: The blood supply to the heart is slowed or stopped because of a blockage in a blood vessel of the heart.

Cardiac arrest: An electrical malfunction that stops the normal rhythm of your heartbeat, shutting down your heart's ability to pump blood — like a breaker switch turning off all the power in a house.

Source: [The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#)