



News Release

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Alameda County Emergency Medical Services Launches Project HeartSAFE: An Automated External Defibrillation Project to Fight Sudden Cardiac Arrest

SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA -- Alameda County Emergency Medical Services (EMS), in partnership with ICE Safety Solution of Fremont and Health Education Services of Menlo Park, is launching Project HeartSAFE to place 185 automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) across the county.

Each year over 295,000 people, young and old, die of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). This number of deaths is equal to two 747 aircrafts colliding in mid-air every day, or one person dying every 2 minutes. More people die of SCA than the combined number of deaths from prostate cancer, breast cancer, AIDS, hand guns, traffic accidents and house fires.

Project HeartSAFE is a county-wide early defibrillation program, developed to save the lives of victims of sudden cardiac arrest, a leading cause of death in the United States. SCA is most often caused by ventricular fibrillation (VF), a chaotic, quivering heart rhythm. When SCA strikes, victims quickly lose consciousness, and their pulse and breathing stop. For each minute that defibrillation is delayed, the victim's chance of survival decreases by seven to ten percent. After 10 minutes without defibrillation, few victims of SCA survive.

Defibrillation, an electric shock across the heart, is the only effective treatment for VF, stopping the chaotic activity and allowing a coordinated heart rhythm to resume. Upon arrival of EMS, the patient will be cared for with advanced life support services.

EMS Agency is committed to increasing SCA survival rates in the county by installing AEDs in locations throughout the county for designated trained responders to use in the event of an SCA. Locations will include qualifying County and community buildings - based on site selection criteria. The goal of Project HeartSAFE is to achieve a three minute response time from collapse of the victim to arrival of the defibrillator and delivery of the first defibrillation shock. By strategically placing defibrillators throughout the community, trained citizen rescuers can defibrillate an SCA victim quickly, greatly increasing the chance of survival. The few minutes saved by those who use a defibrillator before emergency medical services arrive can mean the difference between life and death.

Project HeartSAFE will include county-wide support of the existing 1,100 AEDs already in place, citizen awareness of CPR and AEDs, and promotion of AEDs to county businesses, school and non-profits.

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