



## Health and Safety Bulletin No. 11

### Provision and maintenance of automated external defibrillators at workplaces

#### Background

WorkSafe has become aware of risks arising from a lack of maintenance of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at workplaces.

An AED is a piece of first aid equipment designed to be used by any person, with or without training, to provide a quick and effective response to cardiac arrest. Without treatment, a cardiac arrest can be fatal within minutes.

AEDs provide audible step-by-step instruction on how to use them and how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). An AED can detect whether it has been applied correctly, will instruct whether defibrillation is appropriate, and will only shock a person who is in cardiac arrest. Workplaces should be provided with AEDs, especially where there:

- is a risk to workers from electrocution
- would be a delay in ambulance services arriving
- are large numbers of members of the public.

#### Duties under the work health and safety legislation

Under the work health and safety legislation, a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of workers and other people, such as visitors, is not put at risk.

The PCBU at a workplace must ensure:

- first aid equipment is provided
- that each worker has access to the equipment
- there is access to facilities to administer first aid
- an adequate number of workers are trained to administer first aid.

First aid requirements will vary from one workplace to the next, depending on the nature of the work, the types of hazards, the workplace size and location, and the number of people at the workplace.

A risk management approach, based on the circumstances of the workplace, must be considered when deciding what first aid arrangements are provided, which includes the provision and maintenance of AEDs at the workplaces.

The risk management approach involves identifying hazards that could result in work-related injury or illness; considering other medical issues that may arise; assessing the type, severity and likelihood of injury or illness; providing appropriate first aid equipment, facilities and training; and reviewing first aid requirements regularly or as circumstances change.

## Summary of hazard

Defibrillation is the only way to restore a heart with a fatal heart rhythm back to normal. As a consequence, if an AED fails to operate when used on a person who is in cardiac arrest, first aid will not be effective or reduce the risk of fatality.

## Contributory factors

- Flat batteries in workplace AEDs.
- Expired or missing AED pads.
- AED failing to operate when used.
- AED not visible or accessible when needed.

## Actions required

The PCBU at the workplace should ensure:

- AEDs are maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications
- pads and batteries are checked regularly, as these will expire over time
- pads are replaced if they have been used
- AEDs are located in accessible areas with clearly visible signage
- workers are trained in first aid, including the location and use of AEDs, and provided refresher training as necessary
- first aid and emergency procedures are regularly reviewed.

## References and further information

Work Health and Safety Commission

- [First aid in the workplace: Code of practice](#)