

# **Automatic External Defibrillators in the Parks**

## Program Overview

York County is proud to offer the community several park facilities with playing fields, including a new Sports Complex with lighted baseball fields, soccer fields and playground equipment covering many acres of land. Injuries during sporting events are fairly common occurrences and, in 2007, a volunteer coach experienced a cardiac arrest at one of our sports fields. The need for access to Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) in county parks became apparent because of this incident and the potential for future injuries/health concerns.

The county applied for and received grant funds from the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation to equip park facilities with an AED housed within a cabinet or free-standing pedestal that is connected directly to the Emergency Communications Center (911). When the AED is accessed, 911 is called immediately and instructions can be given over the telephone while emergency personnel are dispatched to the scene.

The installation of these life-saving devices has already proven successful when a child received a laceration that required medical care.

## **Automatic External Defibrillators in the Parks**

York County recognized a need for Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) at county parks and recreation areas to make these potentially life-saving devices available to the public in the event of an emergency. These CAED are installed in climate-controlled cabinets to protect the device and are linked directly to the York County 911/Emergency Communications Center. The cabinets allow immediate contact with an emergency dispatcher who can provide pre-arrival emergency instructions to the caller and deploy the AED, if necessary, while emergency services are being automatically dispatched to the location. This immediate access shortens the time of care for critically ill patients, thus increasing their chance of survival in an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

In the fall of 2007, a volunteer soccer coach with the York County Parks and Recreation Division suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed on the field during a youth soccer match. This incident served as a reminder that cardiac arrests can occur anywhere at anytime and that nobody is immune. After this event, York County's Fire and Life Safety Department met with representatives from Parks and Recreation to discuss the placement of AEDs at county recreation fields and other park areas. The 2007 incident highlighted the need to have AEDs immediately available at these sites due to the increased risk of cardiac arrest during vigorous activities such as sporting events and the large numbers of people drawn to these recreation fields and areas to watch or participate.

In coordination with the county's Risk Manager, a needs assessment was conducted at all county recreation sites and a priority list was developed. The limiting factors with placing the AEDs in these locations were that the devices needed to be kept in a climate-controlled cabinet that could be secured to prevent loss due to theft or

vandalism, and that their access be linked to the 911/Emergency Telecommunications Center to facilitate pre-arrival instruction and the initiation of a full emergency medical response, as needed. The goal of the program was to ensure that AED devices were available at as many county recreation sites as possible.

The needs assessment conducted resulted in the following AED units and cabinets being deployed: two stand-alone AED pedestals installed at parks where existing structures were inaccessible or inadequate to place cabinet style enclosures; five wall-mounted enclosures installed at sites where existing structures with adequate electrical and phone services existed; an interior-mounted cabinet installed at one community recreation site, and two units in hard mounted exterior cases carried on parks and recreation all-terrain vehicles at very large or heavily wooded park sites. In addition to placing the devices in the recreation areas, all parks and recreation staff and volunteers are trained in bystander CPR and the use of the AED. This training will be conducted annually.

Each externally mounted AED cabinet is linked directly to the York County 911/Emergency Telecommunications Center via a dedicated phone line that rings directly into the center as a 911 emergency call. The computer aided dispatch display then automatically gives the dispatcher the location of the call, in case the caller is unable to speak. These sites are tied into a larger AED locator network that is maintained by the 911/Emergency Telecommunications Center.

The cost of the program was covered with a \$50,000 grant by the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation. The county was able to save money on the installation by doing some of the work internally, thus eliminating some contractor fees. Training for

all parks and recreation staff was conducted internally at no cost to the county. Recurring costs for the program include phone access and replacement AED supplies. The estimated annual recurring cost is \$1,550.

Since the installation and full implementation of the program in November 2010, there has already been one instance of the cabinets being used for an emergency when a child use the cabinet to summon 911 to assist a sibling with a severe laceration.

