

Town Begins Replacement of Heart-Starting Machines With New Public-Access Defibrillators

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ENFIELD — The thief who stole a heart-starting machine from Enfield Town Hall a few months ago may be in for a shock of a different sort: the town has been forced to replace all of its automated external defibrillators due to a recall.

The town's AED replacement program was prompted by problems with units purchased last year from Access Cardio of Concord, Mass.

According to town manager Scott Shanley, the defibrillators had battery problems, which resulted in not providing enough electrical current to recipients.

"We realized this past fall that we had a problem," Shanley said. "They were under a recall notice. When we attempted to get them fixed, the company had literally left its headquarters, never to be seen again."

He continued, "We had the police



Added Security. Town Manager Scott Shanley was instrumental in obtaining new heart-starting devices and this alarm box at the town hall. Reminder photo.

department from that community actually go to the building to see if anyone was there, but it was empty."

Before the recall and replacement of the

AEDs could take effect, however, an unscrupulous visitor to town hall decided to abscond with one of the roughly \$1,250 medical devices.

Shanley said he just hopes that the thief does not attempt to use the unit for heart-starting purposes, given the company's stated problems.

"We never even got a recall notice until after the company was gone," Shanley said.

The state attorney general's office is now investigating the matter. Although the previous batch of AEDs was purchased mainly through a grant from the United States Bureau of Justice, the town has less time to replace the defibrillators. Enfield will therefore be more reliant on municipal funding and community support this time around.

(See "Defibrillators" inside)

Defibrillators

Continued from page one

— The town agreed to purchase about 20 new units from Cardiac Science, headquartered in Irvine, Calif.

The new units, called Powerheart AED G3 Pros, cost a bit more, but Shanley believes they will be much more effective. They sell for roughly \$1,490 each, for a grand total of some \$30,000.

"This company has been in business for about 30 years," the town manager said. "We took advantage of the fact that Johnson Memorial Hospital was just finishing an exhaustive analysis [of AEDs] for their medical facility. Their doctors, nurses, and emergency room personnel looked at them for safety, battery life, and other factors."

Shanley said the hospital negotiated the price and Enfield was able to "piggy-back" on that offer. He added that the town has learned its lesson about opting for the lowest bidder when it comes to life-saving devices.

"We're not going to do the analysis based on who would give us the lowest bid," he said. "That's what happened last time."

An AED is a portable device intended to be used on an unconscious victim to defibrillate, or shock back to normal range, a person's heartbeat. Most modern AEDs have sensors that indicate whether or not a shock is required before administering one.

Statistics indicate that, for each minute a patient is without a heartbeat, his chance of recovery diminishes by 10 percent.

Many of the new defibrillators have already been delivered to the town, and the police department is in the process of training some of its employees in the proper use of the devices.

About a dozen of them are to be placed in police cars. A variety of municipal buildings would also house them, including town hall, the public library, and the senior center.

Regarding use of the AEDs, Shanley said they are very user-friendly.

"They're the kind that theoretically don't require training, but we wanted to give a walk-through for the people who are most likely to use them," he said. "It's as easy as they get. In an emergency, all you have to do is get somebody's shirt off and it tells you what to do."

He expects that one of the new AEDs will be delivered to the town hall soon. And just in case anyone is plotting to steal it, there's now an added twist: a clear box with an alarm, which should ward off would-be thieves.

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Correction

The Feb. 15 edition of the Reminder omitted the involvement of AFSCME Local 391 regarding an alarm box for a defibrillator at Enfield Town Hall. The Connecticut State Prison Employees Union branch donated the \$500 alarm box last June. We regret any confusion the omission may have caused.