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Automatic external defibrillators in shopping malls

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Shopping malls are considered high risk for the incidence of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). SCA is a leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming an estimated 325,000 lives each year. During SCA, the heart unexpectedly ceases to function. Unlike a heart attack, SCA is an "electrical problem" caused by a heart rhythm disorder called ventricular fibrillation.

Automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) have clear operator instructions and are designed for easy use. The AED delivers an electric shock to the victim's heart, stopping the arrhythmia and allowing the heart to re-establish an effective rhythm. AEDs are failsafe devices and are designed to prevent operator error, meaning they only deliver the shock to the heart that is in ventricular defibrillation.

Mass General Laws Chapter 112, Section 12V states, "Any person, whose usual and regular duties do not include the provision of emergency medical care, and who, in good faith, attempts to render emergency care including, but not limited to, cardiopulmonary resuscitation or defibrillation, and does so without compensation, shall not be liable for acts or omissions, other than gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct, resulting from the attempt to render such emergency care." In layman's terms, this would mean that any trained AED user could administer life saving treatment without fear of legal repercussions.

Having an AED in your shopping mall can increase the chance of survival for someone in sudden cardiac arrest.

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