

[More Metro news](#)

Council OKs law for heart devices

Defibrillators must go in new buildings

By Helen Gao

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

November 19, 2008

SAN DIEGO – Large new buildings, including stores, churches, hotels, restaurants, schools and theaters, will be required to have heart-starting medical devices on site under a law passed by the San Diego City Council yesterday.

Councilman Jim Madaffer, who just ended a term as president of the League of California Cities, said San Diego is the first city in the state to have such broad requirements.

The devices, known as automated external defibrillators, are common in public buildings and are required by the state at health clubs.

But San Diego's expansion to require offices, warehouses, and all manner of private buildings to install the devices – which cost an average of \$1,600 – and train someone to use them brought opposition from the business community.

Nevertheless, the proposal passed unanimously, a final accomplishment for Madaffer, who has been pushing the ordinance since October 2007 and leaves office next month.

“Having AEDs readily accessible would reduce the response time for emergency care and save more lives,” Madaffer said.

The law has a sliding scale of requirements, based on the type and use of a building and the number of occupants. A church with a capacity of more than 300, for example, would have to have a defibrillator.

The regulation does not apply to single-family homes, parking garages or any existing buildings.

Representatives of the county Building Industry Association and the San Diego Building Owners and Managers Association opposed the ordinance on the grounds that it could create liability for property owners.

State law provides good Samaritans with immunity if they help someone in distress by deploying a defibrillator. However, that law is due to end Jan. 1, 2013. Madaffer said he will work to extend the law.

Craig Benedetto, who spoke on behalf of the Building Owners and Managers Association, said it would be a challenge for property owners to have employees on site who are trained to use AEDs. He said that requirement should be placed on tenants.

Under state law, for the first five devices installed in a building, at least five people have to be trained to use

them. For each additional five devices installed, one more person needs to be trained. Records must be kept on the maintenance of the devices. Training to certify someone to use it is \$35 to \$65 per person.

The regulation requires that defibrillators be placed in buildings in such a way as to “optimally achieve a three-minute response time.”

Madaffer had a friend, Ron McElliott, who died from sudden cardiac arrest during a 10K race in 1999. McElliott's widow, Karen, is an advocate for the San Diego Project Heart Beat, an organization Madaffer helped found.

Project Heart Beat has helped deploy more than 4,000 AEDs throughout the county. Since its inception in 2001, the group says, its defibrillators have saved 52 lives.

The organization partners with the city and county of San Diego, the American Heart Association, San Diego City Firefighters union, and Cardiac Science Corp., a maker of defibrillators.

■Helen Gao: (619) 718-5181; helen.gao@uniontrib.com

Find this article at:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20081119-9999-1m19defib.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright 2007 Union-Tribune Publishing Co. ? A Copley Newspaper Site