

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: June 20, 2012

RE: **Media Reports of Automated External Defibrillator Failures in Canada and Information on the Automated External Defibrillator Maintenance Program for York Region's Heart Alive Program**

In May of this year, the media reported on 562 incidents of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) failures in Canada. This memo will provide further information on the matter as requested by the Community and Health Services Committee.

Staff have reviewed the full report released by Health Canada on the reported AED failures. The report is a complaint registry commencing in 2007 and included complaints about surgically implanted defibrillators in addition to AEDs. Many of the complaints could have been attributed to user error, or inadequate maintenance procedures. It would appear that the majority of the complaints resulted from battery related problems and had defibrillator pad issues.

Like any public safety device, such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, an appropriate maintenance program is required to ensure the readiness and reliability of AEDs.

Since the inception of the York Region Emergency Medical Services Heart Alive Program, there have been six reported uses of an AED and there have been no concerns on any of the AED uses.

Staff are not aware of any issues related to the AEDs used in the Heart Alive Program, although in 2008, there was a recall for Life Pak CR Plus and York Region EMS acted upon all requirements of the recall.

The Heart Alive Program maintains all AEDs according to the following:

- A technician from the AED manufacturer inspects all units once every two years. This is consistent with the manufacturer's recommendations. The next inspection will occur in the summer of 2013.

- During the maintenance inspection, any required software upgrades are completed and the device is recalibrated and recertified. Lastly, the defibrillation pads and battery pack are changed.
- On a monthly basis, the Occupational Health and Safety representative for given work location completes a visual inspection of all AEDs in the location, ensuring that the indicator window on the AED displays "OK".
- The AEDs in the Heart Alive Program perform an "automatic self-test", where the defibrillator tests itself each week and every time the unit is turned on. In addition, every month, the defibrillator performs a more extensive self-test that checks the defibrillator's circuitry to verify that it is "ready for use."

It is important that agencies and organizations with public access defibrillation programs maintain AEDs according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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