

**AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AED)
IN VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To establish new policy for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to manage cardiac arrests on cemetery grounds by implementing emergency response capabilities and access to resuscitation equipment.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT: This Directive establishes roles and responsibilities to implement emergency response capabilities, including access to resuscitation equipment, specifically automated external defibrillators (AED).

This Directive reflects the decision by NCA's leadership to participate in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) AED program.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: National Cemetery Administration, Training and Safety Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the material contained in this Directive. Questions may be referred to the Deputy Director for Safety.

4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

a. NCA Directive 0320 – National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program, February 15, 2022.

b. NCA Directive 0322 – National Cemetery Administration First Notice of Event (FNOE), October 29, 2019.

5. RESCISSIONS: Human Capital Management Letter No.: 005-21-43F1

6. RECERTIFICATION: This directive is scheduled for recertification on the last day of September 2027.

/s/
Matthew T. Quinn
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

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1. PURPOSE/AUTHORITY:

a. The purpose of this Directive is to establish policies for NCA cemeteries to participate in an AED program and for NCA leadership to provide necessary resources to support the AED program. AED policy will enhance NCA's ability to address cardiac arrest incidents that occur on cemetery grounds.

b. This Directive defines roles and responsibilities for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) senior leaders and staff and includes procedural guidance for AED procurement and program requirements for qualifying national cemeteries.

c. The statutory authority for this Directive is found in section 238p of title 42 United States Code (U.S.C.). See the REFERENCES section for more related authorities.

2. BACKGROUND: NCA is committed to distribution of AEDs, training personnel in their use and establishing relationships with local Emergency Medical Systems (EMS) to ensure cardiac arrest victims receive the best possible care. This includes the resuscitation of anyone who suffers a cardiac arrest while on cemetery grounds.

3. POLICY: It is NCA policy to establish an AED program among other emergency response capabilities.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA)** is responsible for reviewing and approving AED program policies and procedures.

b. **Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (PDUSMA)** is responsible for ensuring appropriate resources and funding for the AED program are made available as the budget permits.

c. **Executive Director, Human Capital Management** is responsible for:

(1) Providing consultation for the development of AED program procedures for participating NCA cemeteries.

(2) Providing advice and recommendations for USMA's final decision on AED policies and procedures.

d. **Deputy Director for Safety** is responsible for:

(1) Collaborating with NCA Contracting Service to purchase all AEDs for NCA use. To ensure standardized equipment training and maintenance protocols nationwide, the

same AED devices will be procured from a contracted AED program management company.

(2) Coordinating with the contracted AED program manager for maintenance and procurement matters;

(3) Reporting to the AED program manager equipment issues provided by NCA employees who have AED-related responsibilities described in this directive.

(4) Coordinating employee training with Cemetery Directors, or designee, of participating national cemeteries. See paragraph 3. i.

(5) Determining appropriate locations for AEDs on cemetery grounds and in NCA facilities with input from participating Cemetery Directors.

(6) Maintaining the roster of all AED devices, identifying, and addressing AED maintenance issues, to include periodic replacement of batteries, electrode pads and other AED-manufacturer recommended actions in coordination with the contracted AED Program Manager.

(7) Retrieving all cardiac arrest events captured by the AED data storage and reviewing that information with the contracted AED program management company physician.

(8) Recording all AED data and First Notice of Events or other reports as part of the facility or cemetery's quality assurance program.

e. District Executive Directors are responsible for:

(1) To the extent feasible, requiring participation in the AED program from each national cemetery within their District that meets selection criteria in accordance with this Directive. See section 5. PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE, paragraph (b).

(2) Requiring each participating cemetery within their District to have emergency response capabilities and written emergency procedures in place regarding use of AEDs.

(3) Informing the Deputy Director for Safety of changes in cemeteries that may qualify to participate or are disqualified from participating in the NCA AED Program.

f. Cemetery Directors are responsible for:

(1) Participating in the AED program established by this Directive, if qualified to do so.

(2) Coordinating with the National Safety Office to determine appropriate response procedures for cardiac arrests for all areas of the cemetery or facility.

NOTE: This may require development of new or revision of an existing Emergency Action Plan to include AED use or establishment of relationships with local paramedic or rescue authorities. See [NCA Directive 0320](#) National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program (va.gov).

(3) Soliciting among their employees for at least four volunteers to assign them the additional duty to serve as emergency responders, in accordance with this Directive.

(i) If no employees volunteer, designating at least four non-bargaining unit employees to serve as emergency responders.

(ii) A cemetery that does not have at least a total of four volunteer or non-bargaining unit employees does not qualify to participate in NCA's AED Program.

(4) Completing a Letter of Agreement (accessible on SharePoint for internal VA employee use only) with each employee confirming their assignment (whether volunteered or directed) for training as an emergency responder in addition to the employee's other duties.

(5) Maintaining records of signed agreements of employees assigned to serve as emergency responders as well as certificates of all required training and producing these records upon request.

(6) Reporting program participation issues to the National Safety Office, to include dissolution of employee agreements to serve as volunteer emergency responders.

(7) Providing training opportunities to employees who are not assigned as emergency responders of the location of AEDs and other first aid stations, CPR methods, AED use, response protocols and relevant Federal Tort Claims Act provisions.

(8) Reporting all possible Federal Tort Claims Acts or complaints about the administration of first aid, use of CPR or AED to the appropriate NCA leadership and VA District Counsel office.

(9) Coordinating employee shift schedules to ensure the availability of at least one of the four assigned emergency responders during operational hours and as needed for authorized ceremonies or events.

(10) Requiring that all assigned emergency responders receive training from contracted AED management company on AED use and CPR.

(11) Providing access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for employee use where AEDs are located. PPE may include disposable items such as gloves, CPR facemasks, razors, scissors, record logbooks, medical waste bags and absorbent towels.

(12) Placing AEDs in the administration building and primary maintenance facility. Other locations may be designated, provided the AEDs are clearly identified, accessible and secured to minimize misuse, tampering or theft.

(13) Reporting actual use of an AED on a person in need of resuscitation at their facility in accordance with First Notice of Event policy; see [NCA Directive 0322](#) National Cemetery Administration First Notice of Event (va.gov).

(14) Maintaining diagrams of publicly accessible AED locations for the facility's emergency plan. See [NCA Directive 0320](#) National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program (va.gov).

(15) Inform the respective District Executive Director and AED Program Manager when their cemetery no longer meets the criteria outlined in this Directive or fall below the minimum number of four people trained.

g. Cemetery Employees Volunteering or Designated as Emergency Responders are responsible for:

(1) Signing, along with the Cemetery Director, the Letter of Agreement (accessible on SharePoint for internal VA employee use only) to confirm their status as a volunteer emergency responder.

(2) Providing certification to the Cemetery Director of all required AED, CPR and other emergency response training, which includes recertification training that must be completed every two years. All training requirements will be provided by the contracted AED program management company.

(3) Communicating to the Cemetery Director a need to terminate the agreement to serve as a volunteer emergency responder. Any dissolution of a previously signed emergency responder agreement must be evidenced in writing and signed by the Cemetery Director and the employee.

(4) Notifying their Supervisor of an emergency event and following emergency guidance specified in [NCA Directive 0320](#) National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program (va.gov) where an AED was utilized. This ensures the Supervisor has awareness to report the event utilization in accordance with this directive and other existing emergency reporting protocols.

5. PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE:

a. Provision of AEDs:

(1) NCA National Safety team purchases AEDs that are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and listed on the Federal Supply Schedule. NCA will not accept devices that are donated or otherwise not procured by the NCA National Safety Team.

b. Certified Training Requirements: Training is provided by the national AED contract and is required to be completed every two years. The NCA National Safety Team coordinates training that is four hours in length and provided in person at the cemetery.

(1) All Volunteer or Designated Emergency Responders must complete and provide documentation of completed certified training classes that meet American Heart

Association guidelines for cardiac emergencies. Training courses include but are not limited to delivery of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and AED usage.

c. Criteria for Participating Cemeteries:

(1) Open national cemeteries staffed by at least 10 employees may participate in the AED program. NCA will offer two AEDs at open cemeteries staffed by at least 10 employees. Additional AED devices may be provided as determined on a case-by-case basis by the Deputy Director for Safety.

(2) Each participating cemetery must have a total of at least four NCA employees who are trained in the delivery of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use of an AED. Without meeting this staffing and training requirement, a cemetery will not qualify to participate in the AED Program and any existing AED devices must be removed from the property.

(3) Cemeteries that have not been approved for an AED program as described in this Directive and that have existing AEDs must remove those devices and return them to the NCA National Safety Team.

6. REFERENCES:

a. 42 U.S.C. § 238p, Recommendations and guidelines regarding automated external defibrillators for Federal buildings.

b. Presidential Memorandum, Automated External Defibrillators in Federal Buildings (May 19, 2000).

c. Guidelines for Public Access Defibrillation Programs in Federal Facilities, 74 FR 41133 (August 14, 2009).

d. [NCA Directive 0320](#), National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program (February 15, 2022).

e. [NCA Directive 0322](#), National Cemetery Administration First Notice of Event (FNOE) (October 29, 2019).

f. VA Office of the General Counsel Memorandum, Public Access Defibrillation Program (September 13, 2004).