

# CardioReady Meetings

By Julie Keller

**A**t a recent leadership conference at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina, Gregg Austin, a 46-year-old executive from the Terex Corporation in Westport, Conn., who was attending the event, underwent a cardiac emergency and collapsed. Thankfully, the property is one of a growing number of CardioReady Certified facilities, and an on-site automated external defibrillator (AED) and trained staff members were at the ready. This distinction saved his life and emphasizes a growing trend for the hospitality industry.

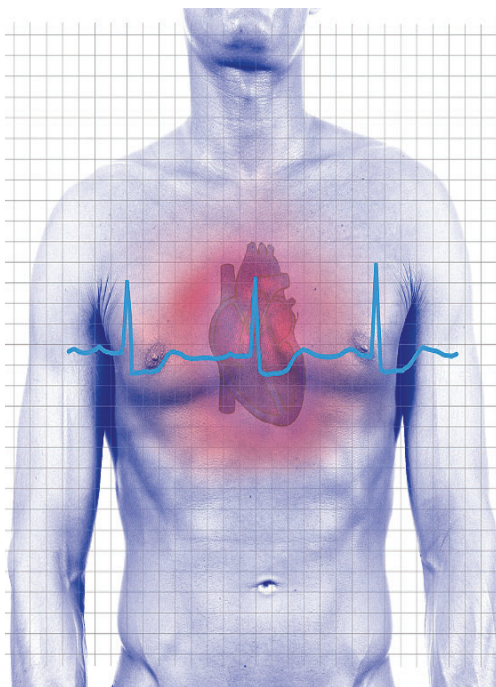
"I think those types of examples, and the fact that this is a preventable death, will continue to gain momentum," says Chris Adderton, president and CEO of the CardioReady Certification Corporation. His company certifies facilities that have completed a 20-step review process that allows them to adhere to the American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines for protecting guests, attendees and employees from Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), a treatable event that kills more than 330,000 people each year in the U.S. The CardioReady certification includes an assessment of the property; the installation, implementation and maintenance of AEDs; and the training of on-site personnel using the AHA's Heartsaver AED curriculum or equivalent to help prevent those deaths. "Only an AED and correctly applied CPR will save a life," Adderton says. "The reality is, if you go from zero probability of a life-saving event to 40, 50 or even 70 percent [probability] when you have the proper equipment, properly trained personnel and a proper response plan, then that is a significant difference."

The number of hotels, convention centers and meeting spaces that are obtaining CardioReady certification is growing. Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental Hotels Group, Loews Hotels and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide are among the major brands that have recently joined the CardioReady Network. But there is still a long way to go. According to CardioReady, less than 10 percent of hotels and only 10 to 20 percent of convention centers have even a single AED available, so planners who want to make heart-healthy meetings a priority do have to make some effort.

But there are a number of ways planners can embrace this heart-healthy trend. Meeting professionals looking for a certified space can identify hotels, convention centers and other meeting facilities through the StarCite Online Marketplace (starcite.com), an on-demand global meetings management website that brings together buyers and suppliers of meeting-related services. There



Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina




are other steps to take, as well, according to Adderton. First, be sure to include CardioReady designation as part of your search criteria. Hotels and convention centers that have received the designation are listed on several meetings industry websites, including mpoint.com and meetings.com. Also, when submitting your next RFP, consider adding the following question: "Will your property have a CardioReady-certified cardiac emergency program in place, including AEDs, for the dates of this meeting?" Finally, talk with your employer and your clients to teach them about the program and gauge their interest. AED programs are likely already in use in the workplace, so the same protections should be available to meeting-goers while traveling and are likely worth any additional expense.



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"This is like any risk-management program that meeting planners follow," Adderton says. "It's no different from having your executive women stay in hotels with indoor hallways with security and adequate lighting—this is a known risk that has a simple technology to help prevent a catastrophic event."

Bernadette Waugh, CMP, manager of meeting services and corporate events for National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) in Herndon, Va., says she recognizes the importance of this program and looks forward to its growth. "I think CardioReady Certification is an excellent idea, and one that I hope is in place everywhere before too long," she says. "We have many members and attendees at our various programs who are well into their 60s and 70s, and it would give me a much greater comfort level knowing that an approved AED program was in place. It makes perfect sense."

Gregg Austin certainly agrees. "My family and I are very thankful that my company chose the Sheraton San Diego for its leadership conference," he says. "It's the reason I am here today and able to tell my story." 

### Stats for Meeting Professionals

**Before you plan or host another meeting or event, consider this:**

- At least **once every two minutes, someone in the U.S. dies from Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)**, which can strike anyone, anywhere, regardless of age.
- That's **335,000 deaths** per year—more than breast cancer, lung cancer, colon cancer, automobile accidents and homicides combined.
- The **chances of surviving SCA increase from zero to 70 percent** if a shock from an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is delivered within three to five minutes of collapse.
- Since professional emergency response can take an average of 12 minutes or more, on-site AEDs are **necessary to provide any chance of survival** in the critical three- to five-minute window.

— Courtesy of the CardioReady Certification Corporation