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“Heart Attack”

by Marty Baumann, Fresh Meadows G.C.
EMT-P West Dundee Fire Dept.

Heart attacks happen on golf courses! We see our customers under stress everyday. Most people think a round of golf is relaxing, serene, calming. Well, not from my point of view ... I know of three attacks this year in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

How many of you know CPR? Do your rangers, employees, starters? How many of your Spanish workers know of the 911 emergency access number? Do you have oxygen in your shop or starter shed? Do you have a first aid kit?

80% of all heart attacks give the recipient an identifiable warning. Heavy sweating, chest pain or pressure, numbness or tingling in the left arm, jaw pain or a feeling of indigestion — any combination of these symptoms can spell heart attack. These symptoms alone do not mean that the person is having a heart attack at that moment, just that one may be on the way soon if situations don't improve.

So what can you do to help your potential victim? First, call 911 immediately! Always activate EMS, they are the patient's best hope. But after the call, you may still have 3-5 minutes in which to make a big difference between life and life-threatening injury or death. Encourage the individual to sit down right where they are — do not try to move them unless it is essential to their health. Make the person comfortable. Give them oxygen — a heart attack is simply the lack of oxygen to the heart muscle. The more oxygen you give the individual, the better they will do in the long run. Loosen their collar and belt, encourage them to relax.

The individual may have a feeling of impending doom, the feeling of being closed-in, or a gripping pain in the chest. These feelings are all very real to a heart attack victim — anything you can do to keep them calm will help.

Finally, if the person loses consciousness or passes out, you should start CPR immediately. The victim has only 2-6 minutes once the heart stops beating to avoid life-threatening injury and you will make a difference if you start CPR right away.

I would recommend, as part of your Spring Safety Training, to spend at least 3 hours in March with your crew learning CPR. Your local fire department, Red Cross office or emergency room at a local hospital will have trained CPR instructors available. It saves lives and only costs you 3 hours of time once a year.

Last of all, be prepared to act fast. If you or anyone on your crew recognizes an employee, volunteer or customer with symptoms of a heart problem, act now. Call EMS, give them comfort and if necessary, start CPR. If it ends up being nothing, you cost someone a couple of hours in an emergency room. But it only takes 2-6 minutes to pass the point of no return ... be prepared and save a life.