

Automated External Defibrillators Can be Used by Anyone at Frankfurt Airport to Save Lives

Approximately 60,000 persons at 500 companies work around the clock at Frankfurt Airport to ensure flawless operations and services for passengers and customers. During peak hours approximately 200,000 persons from around the world are in Terminals 1 and 2.

National and international authorities only require airports to have a couple of Band-Aids at the airport and a doctor on call.

Several years ago, Fraport AG saw the necessity to offer exclusive Medical Services, under the management of Dr. Walter Gaber, to the customers of airlines and companies located at the airport.

Medical Services at Frankfurt Airport employ qualified doctors in the airport clinic around the clock. Furthermore, the medical rescue unit is also at the airport 24 hours a day to serve the airport, adjacent hotels, highways near the airport and nearby communities.

All doctors are trained as emergency doctors. 3 to 4 ambulances per shift are equipped for emergency treatment.

The necessity for the wide range of Medical Services at Frankfurt Airport is based on the demand for the offered services.

In 2003, a total of 36,000 persons were treated in the airport clinic. In 18,000 cases the medical rescue squad was alerted. In 240 cases the special ambulance with the emergency doctor was alerted.

Due to the short stretches, the so-called response times of the rescue squad are among the top times recorded in Germany. Arrival of medical personnel at the scene takes only a few minutes. Nonetheless, these "few" minutes can be very critical in case of cardiac arrest and this time must not be wasted, if possible.

According to the German Heart Association (Professor Trappe, Professor Becker) approximately 100,000 Germans die each year as a result of cardiac arrest. The cause for cardiac arrest and circulatory collapse is ventricular fibrillation. Cardiac arrest will mean sudden death if the affected person is not helped immediately with an electric shock.

With the so-called first defibrillation the survival chances increase greatly. The automated external defibrillators provide escalating energy delivery to stop ventricular fibrillation thus enabling the heart to regain its natural rhythm. The German Heart Association and German Cardiology Association have developed a training concept for untrained persons to apply AEDs for reanimation. These associations are of the opinion that AEDs are suitable for several environments: public facilities, sports facilities, concert halls, corporate businesses, etc. First test periods have provided good results in the USA.

According to the German Heart Association it is possible for untrained persons to save lives with AEDs.

The Automated External Defibrillator cannot damage a healthy heart (!) because the device automatically measures and recognizes if a deadly fibrillation is involved before providing a life-saving impulse.

Frankfurt Airport, operated by Fraport AG, is a good example in Germany and with the cooperation of the German Heart Association and professional association of Hessen (Unfallkasse Hessen) has installed a total of 16 AEDs in both terminals. The employees of Fraport AG and the 1,600 employees of the German Federal Border Police will be trained by medical experts to apply the AEDs.

In 2004, within a few weeks (July 6 – August 3) there have already been 4 cases of AED use by untrained persons at the airport (3 members of the German Federal Border Police and 1 employee of Fraport AG). All cases involved passengers either boarding flights or getting off aircraft.

Case 1:

Female, 72 years old, has meanwhile left hospital in good condition

Case 2:

Male, 49 years old, has meanwhile left hospital in good condition

Case3:

Male, 78 years old, has meanwhile left hospital in good condition

Case 4:

Female, 62 years old, has meanwhile left hospital in good condition

This first defibrillation greatly contributed to the survival of these patients/passengers despite medical rescue personnel arriving quickly at the scene.

Consequently, this proves that our effort to train persons to apply AEDs is a worthwhile cause.

For further information

Dr. med. Walter Gaber
Director of Medical Services
Frankfurt Airport
Fraport AG
w.gaber@fraport.de