



AEDs for Electric Utilities

Kenny Guffey is responsible for worker safety in one of the country's most dangerous fields.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics electrical power-line workers have one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in America. "We're right up there with loggers and crab fishermen," Guffey says. "This is a high-risk industry."

In his job as the director of safety and loss control for the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC), Guffey is responsible for helping 28 member cooperatives achieve regulatory compliance and establish and maintain critical safety programs for their vehicles, equipment, and workers.

Not surprisingly, Guffey is at the forefront of an industry-wide trend toward the deployment of AEDs in facilities and vehicles.



*Ken Guffey, Director of Safety and Loss Control,
Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC)*

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AEDs in electric utilities

"For us, AEDs are an industry standard," Guffey says. "It's because of the nature of our work. We have a lot of remote locations where guys are working with live power lines. In a lot of cases, it would be virtually impossible to get medical service to someone within the three to five minutes in which help has to be administered."

Choosing the right AED vendor

The OAEC were interested in affordable AEDs, but had concerns about ease of use. With emergencies likely to occur in a remote location where a two-man crew was working, they needed rescue equipment that one crew member could deploy if the other one was injured. Guffey talked with colleagues in the electric cooperatives field about their experiences with AEDs.

"After we did the research, I recommended Cardiac Science AEDs. To me, they are the cream of the crop," Guffey said.

Putting Cardiac Science AEDs in the field

Once they chose an AED vendor, the OAEC found deploying AEDs in their facilities and on their trucks surprisingly easy.

OAEC member cooperatives range from 20 employees to upwards of 200. The larger ones, with more flexible budgets,

were the first to invest in the devices. Today more than 70 percent of the cooperatives have AEDs deployed.

“At first we began by talking about AEDs in our safety meetings and in meetings with the cooperatives’ safety people,” Guffey recalls. “Most of our systems start with an AED for their main facility. Then we put AEDs in the field where the guys have the most exposure to energized power lines.”

The field units are kept in the cab of the truck, inside a carrying case. “If there’s an emergency, it’s simply a matter of getting to the truck and grabbing the AED case,” Guffey says.

Great AEDs, backed by great service

The Powerheart® AED G3 from Cardiac Science met and surpassed Guffey’s expectations. Units purchased seven or eight years ago are still going strong. The AED conducts a daily self-test, and linemen routinely perform a quick AED inspection before each field trip.

“The Powerheart AEDs work extremely well,” Guffey says. “We like the Powerheart’s voice prompts, the ease of operation, and the interchangeable defibrillation pads.”

“Cardiac Science AEDs have an ease of operation some of the others lack,” he said. “There are a lot of subtle differences between Cardiac Science AEDs and other AEDs – but in an emergency I don’t think those differences would be so subtle.”

Guffey also had praise for Cardiac Science customer support.

“Scott, our Cardiac Science rep, is just a phone call away,” Guffey says. “Cardiac Science gives us great service.”



Ken Guffey, Director of Safety and Loss Control,
Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC)

Investing in AEDs and safety

Guffey wants 100 percent of the member cooperatives to be rescue ready with an AED.

“For the organizations that haven’t gotten AEDs yet, they say it’s a matter of money,” Guffey says. “Our argument is, and always has been, that AEDs save lives – and you can’t put a dollar value on a saved life.”

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13% of all workplace fatalities result from sudden cardiac arrest.*

*Occupational Safety and Health Administration OSHA 3174

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