

5

minute safety talk



The Importance of First Aid Training

First aid training helps save lives. It's that simple. On the job, in your home or in the community, knowing first aid allows you to help someone who is injured or suddenly ill until help arrives or they're able to see a health care provider. In the U.S. every year:

- 2 million people are hospitalized because of injuries
- 140,000 die from injuries
- 700,000 people have strokes

The goals of first aid include:

- Keeping the victim alive
- Preventing the victim's condition from getting worse
- Helping promote recovery from the injury or illness
- Ensuring the victim receives medical care

Be prepared

- Know what to do.
- Be ready. A first aid situation can occur anytime, anywhere. Think of yourself as a first aider who is always ready to step in and help. Other bystanders at the scene may feel helpless, but you should feel confident that you can assist the victim.
- Have a personal first aid kit, and know where kits are in your workplace. Be sure they're well-stocked with the right supplies. Keep emergency phone numbers, such as EMS, the Poison Control Center and other agencies, handy.
- Know whether your community uses 911 or a different emergency telephone number.

Preventing emergencies

Most injuries, and some sudden illnesses, can be prevented. Follow these general guidelines:

- In the workplace, always follow safety procedures required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. If you have received safety training, use it. It takes only one lapse from a safety procedure to lose a life.
- In your home, take the necessary steps to prevent fires, accidental poisonings and other injuries. Look for hazards and correct them.

Your first aid kit

Keep a well-stocked first aid kit in your home and vehicle, and know where one is kept at work. Take one with you on activities such as camping and boating. A cell phone is also helpful in most emergencies.

Make sure your first aid kit includes all necessary items. Note that you may not use all items in a kit just because they are there. For example, first aiders do not give medications such as analgesics like aspirin or acetaminophen. However, some adult victims may choose to give themselves such medications.

Good Samaritan laws

Most states have laws called Good Samaritan laws designed to

encourage people to help others in an emergency without worrying about being sued. These laws protect you legally when you give first aid. It is unlikely you would be found liable or financially responsible for a victim's injury as long as you follow the guidelines of first aid.

Must you give first aid?

In most states you have no legal obligation to give first aid as a citizen or a bystander at the scene of an emergency. As the specific obligations may vary, ask a local instructor about the law in your area. If you do begin giving first aid, however, you are obligated to continue giving care if you can and to remain with the victim.

Your job may require giving first aid, and that does make you legally obligated. This is called a duty to act. Off the job, however, depending on your state's laws, you are usually not legally required to give first aid except in special cases, such as a parent or guardian caring for a child and other special situations.

Follow standards of care

Legally, you may be liable for the results of your actions if you do not follow accepted standards of care. Standard of care refers to what others with your same training would do in a similar situation. It is important you perform only as you are trained. Any other actions could result in the injury or illness becoming worse. You may be qualified as negligent if:

1. You have a duty to act.
2. You breach that duty (by not acting or acting incorrectly).
3. Your actions or inaction causes injury or damages (including such things as physical injury or pain).

Examples of negligent actions could include moving a victim unnecessarily, or failing to give first aid as you have been trained.

Once you begin giving first aid, do not stop until another trained person takes over. If you leave the victim and the injury or illness becomes worse, this is called abandonment. Note that abandonment is different from justified instances of stopping care, such as if you are exhausted and unable to continue or you are in imminent danger because of hazards at the scene.

Coping with a traumatic event

Emergencies are stressful, especially when the victim does not survive. After an emergency, you may have a strong reaction or problems coping. To help cope with the effects of a traumatic event:

- Talk to others: family members, coworkers, local emergency responders or your family health care provider (without breaching confidentiality of the victim).
- Remind yourself your reaction is normal.
- Don't be afraid to ask for professional help. Employee Assistance Programs and Member Assistance Programs often can provide such help.