

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cardiac arrest survival rate extremely low for condo dwellers

Vancouver, BC – March 5, 2019 – Time is a crucial factor to survive a sudden cardiac arrest, yet 80% of British Columbians either can't locate or don't have quick access to a simple, critical device within the seven to 10-minute survival window to save a life, according to a new study by St. John Ambulance in conjunction with IPSOS. First responders also may not arrive in time to provide life-saving aid. Condo and apartment dwellers are the most at risk because of the added time it takes first responders to reach a suite.

Sudden cardiac arrest can affect anyone – at any age or level of health or fitness. It strikes without warning, killing up to 45,000 Canadians each year. Quick access to an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), paired with CPR, could mean the difference between life or death.

An AED is a small, easy-to-use, lightweight, portable electronic device that delivers an electric shock through the chest wall of a person whose heart has stopped beating. The devices are increasingly being installed in public places like airports and shopping malls, but they aren't commonly installed in most homes or multi-unit residences.

"Most cardiac arrests happen at home or outside of hospital settings," says Karen MacPherson, St. John Ambulance's CEO. "AEDs save lives, and people are willing to use them, if they are available."

St. John Ambulance reports that 66% of British Columbians don't know the location of the nearest AED to their home. Yet, 78% of people would be willing to use an AED, if available, to save someone's life.

"AEDs are highly automated," says MacPherson. "For most units, you simply push one button, follow the verbal prompts or a picture to apply self-adhesive pads to a person's chest, and the device guides you through each step to save someone's life."

A recent study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal found that if you live on the third floor or above in a condo or apartment, you have just a 2.6% chance of survival in the event of a cardiac arrest. The survival rate continues to fall the higher you live. Above the 25th floor, the survival rate is zero. The higher the floor, the longer it takes first responders to reach a casualty.

If defibrillated with an AED within the first minute of collapse, St. John Ambulance says a person's chance of survival is nearly 90%. Each minute delay, the chance of survival falls seven to 10 percent. Brain damage begins to set in around three minutes without treatment.

"Every moment counts," says MacPherson. "The time it takes to access an AED can determine if a person lives or dies. Every condo or apartment building should have one or more of these devices installed and ready to save a life."

The average cost per strata unit to purchase an AED for a building could be as little as a few dollars, according to St. John Ambulance. The charity provides consultations to assist in selecting an AED. It also offers AED training and CPR courses.

St. John Ambulance is consistently campaigning to increase awareness about the importance of AEDs, how to locate and use them, as well as training people in CPR. Learn more at helpaheart.ca.

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About St. John Ambulance BC/Yukon

St. John Ambulance is a 900-year-old humanitarian organization. The charity has operated in British Columbia since 1911 with a mission to improve people's health, safety, and quality of life. The charity trains over 76,000 students in BC and Yukon each year in first aid and CPR. Its volunteers also provide hundreds of thousands of hours of community service in BC and Yukon through the charity's Medical First Responder, Therapy Dog, Community Transfer, and Youth programs. St. John Ambulance is BC and Yukon's safety partner, offering an array of first aid courses and safety products. All proceeds from training and product sales fund the charity's community services, in addition to generous support from donors like you. Learn more at sja.ca.

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