



THE NATIONAL
FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK

6th May 2021

Press Release

Community First Responders Call for Cross Party Support of Strict Penalties for those who steal or damage Defibrillators.

This week another, Public Access Defibrillators (PAD) donated by the Bray CFR group in Wicklow was vandalised and damaged beyond repair. This is the latest in a string of such cases around Ireland including the Order of Malta in Drogheda, Co. Louth, Wicklow Town CFRs, Co. Wicklow, Meath, Bray, Arklow, Limerick and Cork.

CFR Ireland is calling for cross party support for the Life Saving Equipment Bill which is currently before the Seanad in the 3rd stage. This bill would impose a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment or a €50,000 fine or both for those convicted of interfering with a defibrillator or life buoy.

CFRs and other voluntary groups around the country have fundraised to purchase and install these lifesaving devices. **Dr David Menzies**, Medical Director of CFR Ireland said:

“Damage to, or theft of a defibrillator installed for public use could be a death sentence for a patient if it were not available for a patient in cardiac arrest as a result. It is that serious. Locking up AEDs isn’t the ideal solution – you wouldn’t lock up a fire extinguisher.”

In the event of a cardiac arrest, CPR and defibrillation within the first 10 minutes is the most important intervention. The patient’s chances of survival drop by 10% for every minute, treatment is delayed. There are estimated to be over 13,000 AEDs in Ireland. **John Fitzgerald**, Chair of CFR Ireland said:

“CFR Ireland believes that strict penalties should apply to those guilty of theft of or damage to life saving devices such as defibrillators. The issue of defibrillator theft and damage is not new, it is time for action.”

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Editor's Notes

Community First Responders (CFRs) are civilian responders who are trained to international standards in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defibrillation. They are part of a local CFR scheme, linked to the National Ambulance Service. When the emergency services are alerted to a cardiac arrest, chest pain, choking or stroke, a civilian responder from the local CFR scheme is automatically dispatched along with the ambulance services. The local CFRs can often attend the scene before an ambulance will arrive, and in cases where time is critical such as cardiac arrest, this can save lives. Currently there are over 250 CFR schemes around the country, all linked to the National Ambulance Service.

CFR activity is entirely voluntary. More information about the network and how to establish a CFR scheme can be found on the website: www.cfr.ie.

Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are sometimes also referred to as a Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) are a device which can be used by a lay person with little or no training to successfully restart the heart of a patient in cardiac arrest. These devices are often charitably funded and need to be kept in heated cabinets in cold weather. The typical cost of an AED and cabinet is well over €2,500.

The Life Saving Equipment Bill was initiated in 2017 by Senator Keith Swanick. It proposes penalties of up to 5 years imprisonment and €50,000 fine for those convicted of theft or, or damage to, a defibrillator or life buoy. CFR Ireland was glad to support this bill when it was proposed. It is now in the 3rd stage in Seanad Eireann.

<https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/bill/2017/92/eng/initiated/b9217s.pdf>



Defibrillator Cabinet at Bray, Co Wicklow from which an AED was taken this week.



Defibrillator from Bray, Co Wicklow which was damaged this week.