

Some states have passed laws requiring defibrillators in public buildings, and Congress has approved money for rural communities to buy them. The lunchbox-size devices cost around \$700 to \$1,200; almost 200,000 are distributed a year.

The study found that most of the recalls were for electrical or software problems. The findings were based on reports to the Food and Drug Administration from 1996 through 2005. The FDA issued 52 advisories about automated external defibrillators or crucial components during that period. Those advisories applied to 385,922 devices.

One malfunction report to the FDA read: "While attempting to defibrillate a patient in cardiac arrest, the device made a loud 'bang' sound and displayed an error message. The device was then unable to charge or discharge energy."

The study appears in the August 9th's edition of *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Schools, casinos and sports arenas are among the places that now have the devices and the responsibility for keeping them in working order.

"I do not feel that AEDs are like fire extinguishers, that you put them out there and then you're done," said Dr. Lance Becker of the University of Pennsylvania and a longtime leader in the American Heart Association. He said businesses that install defibrillators should offer CPR training, maintain the devices and plan drills.

Rob Clark, spokesman for Medtronic Inc., one of the top manufacturers of the devices, said Medtronic tracks all of its devices and sends word of recalls and safety alerts by certified letter, sometimes following up with phone calls and service visits, and reaches well over 90 percent of device owners.

"The thousands of lives these have saved clearly outweigh the small risk in terms of malfunction," Clark said.

PLAN FOR AIRPORT CRASH TRUCK DUTIES IN LIMBO

QUINCY, Illinois (USA) - The Adams County Ambulance Board decided August 8th that the ambulance service is not in position to handle the crash truck duties at Quincy Regional Airport.

Fire Chief Scott Walker had asked the ambulance service if it was interested in possibly taking on this duty next year. But Paul Davis, ambulance service director, said the agency isn't prepared for such a thing. "It's not feasible for us at this time," he told the

board. "There are a lot of training concerns that we need to deal with. There is equipment to deal with, and to utilize one of our existing crews is not going to be a good solution."

Davis said it would cost the ambulance service at least \$250,000 to hire and equip six full-time employees to staff the airport operation. "This is probably not within the scope of the mission that I want to pursue in the future," Davis said. "I'd like to expand our services and become diversified, but we don't have the means, personnel wise, to do it right now."

Davis was directed to write a letter to the fire chief explaining the agency's decision. In an interview, Walker said the Quincy Fire Department has been exploring different options for handling the crash truck operation at the airport.

The Fire Department has been staffing the truck since June from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily as part of an effort to make the airport safe for commercial airline flights. Current Federal Aviation Administration regulations require crash protection to be available during any commercial flight operations that involve planes with 30 or more seats. The commercial planes now using the airport don't have that many seats, but the city has been providing the fire protection anyway in anticipation of new FAA rules going into effect next June that will require crash protection for all commercial flights, regardless of plane size.

Walker said the Fire Department is currently staffing the crash truck with available on-duty firefighters from local fire stations supplemented with some off-duty personnel. Walker said he will have to come up with more of a permanent plan for staffing the airport by next June.

"In the interest of efficiency and trying to do the best with the taxpayers' dollars, we're looking at various options," he said. Those options include having the Fire Department continue to staff the airport as it is now; opening a fire station permanently at the airport and hire more firefighters or use off-duty personnel; farm the business out to a private company; or see if a volunteer agency wants to do the job on a subcontracting basis.

"We're providing the service now simply because we want to see whether or not doing it the way we're doing it will work as a feasible long-term solution," Walker said. "But I'm exploring all options, essentially, just to see if there's a different way to skin the cat, so to speak, and what would be the best choice. Right now we're just having some vague discussions and crunching some numbers." (*Story by Edward Huser—Quincy Herald Whig 08/09/2006*)