

Charleston County firefighters, EMTs trained on new high-performance CPR method

by Alex Heaton
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CORRECTION: A video attached to a previous version of this story misidentified Dr. David French as the Charleston County EMS director. Dr. French is the medical director for Charleston County EMS. Also, this story previously identified Carl Fehr, EMS division chief with Charleston County as the EMS director. We apologize for the errors.

An amped-up CPR method is saving lives in Charleston County, as firefighters and paramedics throughout the area have completed training on a new CPR technique called high performance CPR.

It's no longer just about mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and checking pulse when it comes to patients in cardiac arrest, according to Carl Fehr, EMS division chief with Charleston County. "The sooner those chest compressions start the better a chance a person has of surviving cardiac arrest in the pre-hospital environment," said Fehr.

So that's where first responders zero in, because Fehr said it gives patients more time to get to the hospital and, in turn, a better shot at survival.

Fehr said they call it "pit crew CPR", and he said it's a lot like your typical CPR basics but on steroids.

"It has taken the science to the next level and understanding what effectively works in sudden cardiac arrest and what's going to help improve survivability rates," he explained.

500 firefighters and 200 paramedics in Charleston County are now trained on this high-performance CPR, but Fehr said they need the public's help as well.

"If we can increase the number of people that are doing CPR before rescuers arrive, we've got a significantly better chance of survival," he said.

<https://abcnews4.com/news/local/charleston-county-firefighters-emts-trained-on-high-performance-cpr>

Many people, Fehr said, are afraid of defibrillators when they should not be. He hopes that changes.

"It'll tell you exactly what to do," he said. "It's not going to hurt you. It's not going to hurt them."

Couple greater public knowledge of CPR basics with this new high-performance training the professionals have and the county has another life-saving tool in its arsenal.

"This really optimizes what professional rescuers do when they show up on scene," said David French, the medical director for Charleston County EMS. "A lot of people have been through the basic CPR training classes and that's a great starting point, but this really tries to streamline what we do to make a difference in outcomes."

Training on the high-performance CPR started in September and just finished last week. It's already saving lives, like that of Chief Greg Bailey [who suffered a heart attack while participating in the 9/11 Silent Walk](#) over the Ravenel Bridge on October 1.

"We're not even 30 days," said Tian Griffith, the executive director of the 9/11 Silent Walk. "We're talking 2.5 weeks and he is off of a vent. He is speaking he is walking, and he is having a good time. He is planning out his future. These are all things we didn't see would happen on October 1."

Griffith said Bailey's survival is a direct result of the high-performance CPR performed on scene that day.

"From seeing him in cardiac arrest to today walking around, jovial, laughing, back to where he's enjoying life, that's phenomenal to see," Griffith said.

The survival rate for patients in Charleston County is 38 percent compared to a national rate of 34 percent.

EMS officials said they are doing everything they can to continue to stay above the national average and increase that number.