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Fairfield Fire Department unveils new CPR device

Norman Weitzel, Education, and Training Manager with Medic Ambulance (left) and Ryan LaRowe, Fairfield Fire Department firefighter/paramedic demonstrate the LUCAS 3, a mechanical CPR device that has been in use by both organizations aiding first responders in life-saving situations since the middle of January Tuesday during a presentation at Fairfield Fire Station 37. (Joel Rosenbaum — The Reporter)

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Fairfield residents may now have a greater chance of surviving a heart attack thanks to a newly acquired CPR device.

Through a partnership between Medic Ambulance Service, NorthBay Healthcare and the Fairfield Fire Department, medical first-responders are now equipped with LUCAS v.31, an electronic chest compression system that gives caregivers a break and allows fire, ambulance and hospital crews to focus on patient care, while guaranteeing the compressions are being done.

The department showed off the device during a media presentation Tuesday.

“Truly, this is about saving lives,” Fairfield Fire Chief Tony Velasquez told the crowd.

Jim Pierson, the president and COO of Medic Ambulance, said the goal was to continue to find ways to provide the best service for the community.

“It’s not just about these devices,” he said. “Our team — NorthBay, Medic and Fairfield — we’re looking at outcomes. We’re looking at how CPR is done prior to the device being applied, how it’s being done afterward. We’re seeing amazing outcomes already.”

LUCAS is utilized by sliding a back plate underneath a cardiac arrest patient and having the plate snap onto two bars in a U-formation. When a caregiver or paramedic presses a start button, a pressure pad pushes down on the patient’s
Pierson told The Reporter the goal was to continue to provide compressions to the patient, even as the caregiver may tire out from having to manually push down after a long period of time.

“As the call drags on, their caregivers get tired,” he said. “With LUCAS 3, it ensures that mechanicals are always going to be beating at the right beats per minute.”

To demonstrate just how easy it can be to tire out while giving compressions, a virtual compression game station was set up where attendees could press down on a foam pad in the rhythm of heart icons moving across the screen. If the player missed a heartbeat, they lost points — think “Guitar Hero” for CPR. As players learned, it was not an easy task.

Fairfield Fire Chief Tony Velasquez speaks during a presentation about the cardiac improvement outcome program that has been implemented throughout Fairfield Tuesday at Fire Station 37. (Joel Rosenbaum — The Reporter)

Pierson said the LUCAS device was part of a larger project to address responses to cardiac arrest and educate the public on the importance of performing CPR.

“Our worst outcome rates and our worst bystander CPR rates per the community...
Pierson said the goal was to make sure individuals are not afraid to perform CPR, should a situation arise, as they wait for medical services to arrive.

Fire Captain Rob Herrick said the department first started using the LUCAS machines in January and has already had seven deployments so far.

“We’ve had great success already with the quality of compressions that they’ve delivered,” he said.

Herrick said the next step was to train all of the department’s crews as well as Medic Ambulance’s crews in a high-performance CPR program that includes using LUCAS and optimizing patient care.

Dr. Seth Kaufman, the chief medical officer of NorthBay said he has been impressed by seeing the LUCAS machine in action and has great hopes for them.

“Quality chest compressions done as quickly as possible will improve survival,” he said.

Pierson said Medic Ambulance would look at the data and expand LUCAS throughout the county.

“That would be our No. 1 goal,” he said.

Herrick said the department would be using the data to enhance its patient care.

“With this collaboration between us, Medic Ambulance and NorthBay, we’re going to be sharing the data collected from these machines and continually look to find ways to improve our patient care, which ultimately will increase our community’s chance of survival if they were to suffer from sudden cardiac arrest,” he said.

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