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Defibrillator training integral to NASC Swim Tester Course

PENSACOLA, Fla. – Newly-qualified swim instructors at the Naval Aviation Schools Command (NASC) bring not only aquatic survival and swimming stroke mechanic skills poolside, but also certification in Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) operation.

NASC teaches AED use as a component in the Navy Swim Tester Course, Basic Swimming and Water Survival Instructors Course, and Intermediate Water Survival Training Course. While some courses are conducted quarterly and others weekly, combined this training reaches over 2,000 new students per year.

An AED automatically diagnoses life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias and can assist with treatment. In 2009, the Secretary of the Navy issued an instruction (SECNAVINST 5100.17) to develop, implement, and maintain an installation of Automated External Defibrillation programs at Department of the Navy commands.

According to information from the American Heart Association, AED programs within an organized Emergency Medical Services System have been shown to improve survival in sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) victims. Communities that have implemented programs ensuring widespread public access to AEDs, combined with appropriate training, maintenance, and coordination, have dramatically improved the survival rates from SCA. The

American Red Cross website states that SCA is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, and more than 350,000 people will suffer from SCA this year alone.

An example of an implemented AED program is the training received during the CPR portion of the NASC Swim Tester Course. Pat Johnson has been an instructor at the training command for the past seven years.

"AED is part of the American Red Cross CPR program. We've been using it the entire time I've been teaching here as part of our courses for Aviation Pre-Flight Indoctrination (API) students and Naval Air Crew Candidate School (NACCS) students. It is also part of the Lifeguarding Course taught within the Navy Swim Tester Course and the Basic Swimming and Water Survival Instructors Course," explained Johnson.

The AED is used in conjunction with administration of CPR as part of the Cardiac Chain of Survival.

"Each minute CPR and defibrillation are delayed, a victim's chance for survival is reduced by about ten percent. Most people would be able to use an AED with no prior experience," said Johnson. "AEDs typically have voice prompts that make them easy to use and understand, even if someone hasn't had specific training with the device."

The Red Cross claims that an AED is the only effective treatment for restoring a regular heart rhythm during sudden cardiac arrest and is an easy to operate tool for someone with no medical background.

"Working in the medical field, it is a top priority to stay current with my medical skills. After receiving AED instruction, I feel confident to handle life-threatening emergencies that might arise when instructing my swimmers course," said HM1 Ryan Gordon, an Independent Duty Corpsman at SEAL Team 18. "Being prepared makes all the difference. It's imperative that

everyone know how to work an AED, regardless of your rate or job; the AED is very user friendly and makes a big difference in saving lives.” Gordon received AED training as part of the Navy Swim Tester Course.

For more information on Naval Education and Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnet.

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Story by Lt.j.g. Michael Hathaway, Naval Education and Training Command
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