

App that alerts CPR-trained bystanders could make lifesaving connection

February 22 2019, by Shannon Prather, Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

If you should collapse of a sudden cardiac arrest at the mall food court, your lifesaver could be shopping nearby and completely unaware that someone is in urgent need of help.

Recently, Ramsey County Emergency Communications staffers stood alongside [fire chiefs](#) and emergency room doctors to unveil a free smartphone app they believe can make a lifesaving connection to a CPR-trained [bystander](#) in time to save potentially dozens of people in the metro area each year.

The PulsePoint app alerts nearby CPR-trained bystanders when 911 dispatch receives a call of [cardiac arrest](#) in a public location.

"When seconds count, we need everyone's help to save a life. That's what PulsePoint is all about," said Roseville Assistant Fire Chief David Brosnahan.

The app also identifies the location of the nearest automated external defibrillator (AED), a portable medical device that delivers an electric shock to the heart.

Anyone can download the app and identify themselves as CPR-trained. Their phone will beep or buzz, much like an Amber Alert does, when someone's heart stops and a call for help is made.

Ramsey County, which is spending \$75,000 on the app for a five-year

licensing agreement, gets about 400 cardiac arrest calls a year. About 60 of them occur in a [public place](#).

"Each year we have examples in our community where bystander CPR and AED placement have directly saved people's lives," said Maplewood EMS Chief Mike Mondor. "Just last year in community buildings, we had three people that had their lives saved by bystanders."

Ramsey County joins more than 3,000 jurisdictions across the nation—including Los Angeles, Seattle and Milwaukee—that are using PulsePoint. There are about 1.3 million PulsePoint app users nationally.

More than 326,000 Americans have cardiac arrests outside of a hospital each year, according to the American Heart Association. Only about 10 percent of people who collapse from [sudden cardiac arrest](#) outside a hospital survive.

In Minnesota, St. Louis Park, Winona and Moorhead are using the app.

Roseville firefighter Dave Doucet said he's responded to cardiac arrest calls at malls and stores packed with people, only to find the victim on the floor unaided. Even a bystander starting [chest compressions](#) in the first critical minutes can greatly increase the victim's chances of survival, he said.

"It keeps the blood flowing to the [vital organs](#) and the brain," Doucet said.

Since Rapid City, S.D., started using PulsePoint in late 2017, 12 of 16 victims of cardiac arrests in public places received bystander CPR, said Jim Bussell, spokesman for the Rapid City Fire Department. About half of the 16 survived, he said.

PulsePoint was started by San Ramon, Calif., Fire Chief Richard Price. He was eating lunch at a deli when he heard sirens. Someone next door had suffered cardiac arrest.

"I was just feet away from the cardiac arrest victim, but completely unaware of their peril," said Price in a Ted Talk. "This was a startling event for me. ... I was surprised I could be so unaware of something so serious happening so close by."

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