

## CPR can be the difference between life and death

**L**etter carriers fan out into communities every day, and sometimes this puts them in the right place at the right time to save a life. One way they often save lives is by having been trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Just recently, *The Postal Record* has reported the following stories:

- Oshkosh, WI Branch 173 letter carrier **Eric Momsen** saved a baby using his CPR training while out on his route.
- Philadelphia Branch 157 member **Gary Booz**, a member of his station’s safety team, used CPR to save the life of a clerk who had collapsed at his post office.
- Out on his route, Worcester, MA Branch 12 member **Brian Cole** found a man lying on the ground with blood on his face and kept him alive with chest compressions until help arrived.

These are just a few cases of letter carriers who heroically saved lives using CPR.

“It just came back naturally,” Booz said about using CPR to save a life. Booz had taken training provided by his station through its safety committee a few years earlier. “It’s so important to have this training,” he said. “You never know when you’ll have to use it.”

### The basics

CPR was developed as a way for someone with no access to special equipment to keep alive a person who is not breathing and/or whose heart has stopped beating until medical help arrives. CPR and related rescue techniques have been proven to significantly improve the chance that a person in such a medical crisis will make it alive to a hospital for treatment—and will live to go home.

CPR trains people to assure first that

the victim’s airway is clear of obstructions. To deliver oxygen to a person who has stopped breathing, a rescuer can use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, forcing his or her breath into the lungs of the victim. In between breaths, a rescuer pushes on the chest of the victim, causing the heart to squeeze blood through the body as if it were pumping on its own.

CPR training also may teach how to assess the needs of a person having a medical crisis, how to help infants and small children, and how to use special equipment. Some courses may cover other problems such as heat stroke, bleeding and burns. Even if you previously had training in CPR, things may have changed since then. New techniques and new technology are improving the chances of saving lives, and that requires updated training.

If you come across an emergency, it’s better to do something than to do nothing at all. However, what to do depends on your level of expertise.

Here’s advice from the American Heart Association (AHA):

**Untrained:** If you’re not trained in CPR, then provide hands-only CPR. That means uninterrupted chest compressions of 100 to 120 a minute until paramedics arrive. You don’t need to try rescue breathing.

**Trained and ready to go:** If you’re well-trained and confident in your ability, begin with chest compressions instead of first checking the airway and doing rescue breathing. Start CPR



# CPR is as easy as **C-A-B**



## **C**ompressions

Push hard and fast  
on the center of  
the victim's chest



## **A**irway

Tilt the victim's head  
back and lift the chin  
to open the airway



## **B**reathing

Give mouth-to-mouth  
rescue breaths

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with 30 chest compressions before checking the airway and giving rescue breaths.

**Trained but rusty:** If you've previously received CPR training but you're not confident in your abilities, then just do chest compressions at a rate of 100 to 120 a minute.

For chest compressions, here are the steps, according to the AHA:

- Put the person on his or her back on a firm surface.
- Kneel next to the person's neck and shoulders.
- Place the heel of one hand over the center of the person's chest, between the nipples. Place your other hand on top of the first hand. Keep your elbows straight and position your shoulders directly above your hands.
- Use your upper body weight (not just your arms) as you push straight down on (compress) the chest at least 2 inches but not greater than 2.4 inches. Push hard at a rate of 100 to 120 compressions a minute.
- If you haven't been trained in CPR, continue chest compressions until there are signs of movement or until emergency medical personnel take over. If you have been trained in CPR, go on to checking the airway and rescue breathing.

The above advice applies to adults, children and infants needing CPR, but not newborns.

It's been determined that chest compressions alone, without mouth-to-mouth breathing assistance, can have the same or even greater effect in saving a life for some victims, depending on their age and the circumstances.

Understanding when to use compression-only CPR and when to help a victim with breathing is another good reason to take CPR training or to take it again if you haven't had it recently.

### **Automatic external defibrillators**

Another tool that is making its way into public spaces such as office buildings, airports and airliners, shopping malls and postal facilities is the automatic external defibrillator (AED).

CPR keeps a heart pumping only for a short time period—until a doctor or emergency medical technician (EMT) can attempt to start it beating again, usually using a defibrillator that delivers an electric shock to the chest through a pair of paddles. An AED is a portable device, equipped with a computer and sensors, that automatically detects whether someone needs defibrillation to restart their heart, and it instructs an untrained user how to do it using the device.

EMTs have been using AEDs for decades, but the devices now are being installed in places where anyone can use them to try to save a life without waiting for EMTs to arrive, which might be too late. While AEDs are designed for anyone to use without

training, CPR training programs often include instruction in the effective use of an AED.

### **Safety committees**

Some postal employees are trained in CPR and have access to designated safety officers, and some facilities have AEDs, but USPS does not require either. To find training in CPR or first aid in your area, go to the AHA's CPR website, [cpr.heart.org](http://cpr.heart.org), or the American Red Cross site at [redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr](http://redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr). Some postal stations offer CPR training to employees.

"CPR, first aid and AEDs are essential topics for joint safety committees to consider," NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr. said. "Find out who knows CPR in the installation and make training available to anyone who wants it. If your office doesn't have a safety committee, you can bring it up in the labor-management process.

"Having up-to-date training in CPR gives you the power to do what you need to do in an emergency instead of wishing you had done something better," Peralta added. "As public servants, training to help save lives is a great idea for letter carriers." **PR**