



# data points

April 2026

Data Points is a publication produced by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center to highlight a collection of similar events or lessons that signal a need for specific action. Data Points is published on an “as needed” basis as the result of ongoing analysis.

## **Recurring Lesson: Have an Automated External Defibrillator (AED).**

Since 2012 we have recorded six separate incidents of successful use of an AED on wildland fire personnel.

Incident	State	Year
<a href="#">Hoosier NF Rx Fire CPR &amp; AED Use</a>	IN	2022
<a href="#">Deschutes NF Work Capacity Test Incident</a>	OR	2015
<a href="#">Big Meadow Fire Medevac</a>	CO	2013
<a href="#">Streeter Fire Medical Incident</a>	CA	2013
<a href="#">Beaver Creek Fire Cardiac Arrest</a>	ID	2013
<a href="#">Work Capacity Test Heart Attack</a>	IN	2012

### **The Problem**

Firefighters suffer from cardiac-related emergencies on a regular basis. During the same 11-year span referenced above (2012-2022) we found 24 wildland fire cardiac-related fatalities. Additional nonspecific “medical emergency” fatalities also occurred within that timeframe.

Early use of an AED [improves the likelihood of survival](#) in cardiac-related medical emergencies.

### **Recommended Action**

Provide AEDs for all vehicles and buildings regularly staffed by wildland firefighters. Be sure to include a testing and maintenance plan for all purchased AEDs.

“AEDs are a simple tool that can save a life and should be an available resource on all Engines and Firefighting Vehicles.”

[Streeter Medical Incident 2013](#)

This topic was highlighted in a 2015 RLS:

[Automated External Defibrillator Successes](#)

Five recent incidents where an **Automated External Defibrillator** Saved a **LIFE**.

You can't use an AED if you don't have one.

**LESSON:**  
**Buy an AED**

## Specific AED-Related Events

### Hoosier NF Rx Fire CPR & AED Use Indiana, 2022

After completion of a prescribed fire, an AD firefighter was found on the ground in a prone position. 911 was called and the Burn Boss was notified. Within minutes, an agency vehicle arrived with an EMT. Agonal breathing was observed but no pulse or respirations were found. CPR and rescue breaths began. Shortly after, the engine arrived and an AED was put in place. Five shocks were advised and administered in between CPR rotations. Next, local EMS arrived on scene and continued critical care, implemented three additional shocks with their AED, and gave the patient epinephrin. A pulse was indicated, and the patient started to breathe on his own with assistance.



A success listed in the report: *“Maintaining the AED on the engine and marking the compartment.”*

### Big Meadow Fire Medevac Colorado, 2013

On the morning of June 16, 2013, while en-route to their assigned area of the fire, an IHC crewmember collapsed and quickly became unresponsive. Another crew member immediately assessed the patient and confirmed his breathing and heart rate had stopped. Emergency Medical Technicians from two crews began Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and one of the IHC Superintendents initiated a medical emergency response via radio. Paramedics from the spike camp were deployed to the scene. An Automated Electrical Defibrillator (AED) was successfully utilized, reestablishing a pulse in the patient. After medically stabilizing the patient, he was carried by Stokes litter approximately one quarter of a mile to H-1 and transported by air ambulance to St. Anthony’s Hospital in Lakewood, Colorado.



Recommendation from the report:

*“Have AEDs available through the NFES cache system and consider providing CPR, first aid, and AED training for all fireline qualified personnel.”*

### Deschutes NF Work Capacity Test Incident Oregon, 2015

A U.S. Forest Service employee completes the "Light" Work Capacity Test. A few minutes later, he collapses with labored breathing, weak pulse, and his face turning purple. He is treated with hands-only CPR and AED which revives him.

Quotes from the report:

*“In the interviews for this FLA, interviewees universally agreed that the AED was absolutely critical in the outcome of the incident, and that the oxygen likely helped.”*

*“The most important thing they did: high performance CPR. That and the AED saved his life.”*

