

Job site: _____
 Foreman: _____

Date: _____
 G.C. _____

SMOHIT Safety Sense
 Toolbox Talks for the Sheet Metal Industry

Heart Attacks

- Many people think a heart attack is sudden and intense, like a "movie" heart attack, where a person clutches his or her chest and falls over. In reality, heart attacks usually start slowly, as a mild pain or discomfort.
- The first hour also is the most risky time during a heart attack—it's when your heart might stop suddenly. Unfortunately, many people delay too long before seeking care.
- Symptoms of a heart attack include pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. There may be discomfort in other areas of the upper body, which may be felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. Other symptoms may also include shortness of breath, which often occurs with or before chest discomfort.
- Two ways to aid a person when they are having a heart attack before professional medical assistance can be obtained are cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation.
- CPR is a process that provides artificial circulation and breathing when an individual's heart and breathing stops. It involves chest compression and artificial breathing, and it may double a person's chance of survival from sudden cardiac arrest. CPR works to temporarily circulate blood to vital organs, but CPR cannot restore a victim's heart to a healthy rhythm.
- Defibrillation shocks the heart back into normal rhythm and can possibly reverse cardiac arrest. Defibrillation must occur as soon as possible after the onset of a heart attack to be most effective. Automated external defibrillators have become increasingly available on construction sites. Published studies have proven that early defibrillation, within the first few minutes of cardiac arrest, can save up to 74% of victims.
- Recent studies have shown that one possible way to survive a heart attack when you are alone is to cough aggressively and loudly until you reach medical care. Coughing causes blood pressure to increase and forces blood to flow through restricted areas.

Instructor Tips

- **Emphasize to workers that heart disease is currently the leading cause of death in the United States.**
- **Explain that heart disease that leads to cardiac arrest can arise from congenital defects, infection, narrowing of the coronary arteries, or high blood pressure. Also note that electrocution, drowning, choking, trauma (being "scared to death"), and drug abuse can cause cardiac arrest.**

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Reference: OSHA 29 CFR 1926.50