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POLICE & FIRE

Local Foundation Buys Modems, Life-Saving Minutes for Heart Attack Victims

Howard Hospital Foundation uses more than \$50,000 for modems that will send EKG readings to hospital from county ambulances and fire trucks.

By [David Greisman](#) 12:39pm

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Every second matters to a heart attack victim and those who are trying to save that person's life.

They've just had more of those valuable moments bought for them.

Ambulances and fire trucks in Howard County are now equipped with LIFENET, a system that sends important information about heart attack patients to hospitals while the patients are still on their way there.

"Time is muscle," said Dr. Kevin Seaman, medical director for the [Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue](#) ([/listings/howard-county-fire-rescue-department](#)). "The goal here is opening that blocked artery as rapidly as possible to treat and help prevent damage to the heart."

Patients en route to the hospital will have an electrocardiogram reading of their heartbeat done. Before LIFENET was installed, hospital staff would have to wait for a printout of that EKG reading to be handed to them.

Not anymore.

Modems now will send a digital copy of those readings to the hospital, and even to the cardiologist's cell phone.

Emergency responders aim for a "door-to-balloon time" of less than 90 minutes.

"The cardiologist and the team are mobilized to be there and save precious minutes as the patient starts transport to the hospital," Seaman said. "This really gets them involved much sooner ... in a time-dependent emergency."

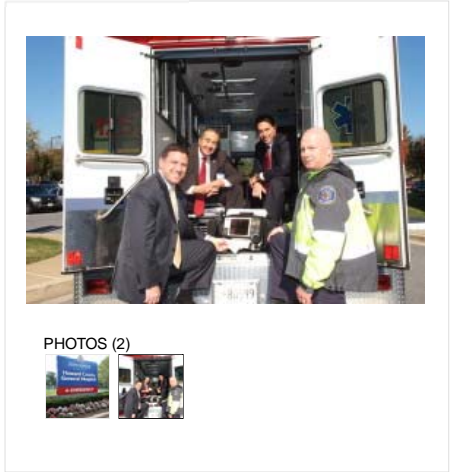
The system was installed within the past three or four weeks.

The total cost of the 21 modems was more than \$50,000, Seaman said. But that entire price tag was paid for through donations to the Howard Hospital Foundation.

The foundation has donated tens of millions of dollars to [Howard County General Hospital](#) ([/listings/howard-county-general-hospital](#)) in the past 30 years, according to David Powell, the foundation's chairman.

"It's quite a bit when you're talking about community donations, but that brings lifesaving technologies like this to the hospital," Powell said.

"We already have excellent health care," he said. "This just takes it up one level."



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