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RPS gains new tool in effort to save more lives

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Regional Paramedical Services has recently added a new tool it hopes will lessen the damage done during a heart attack. The company purchased 40 new Zoll X-Series heart monitors to be used in all five counties the company services. These monitors enable paramedics to get information from 12-leads and see ECG results on screen. It will also give the paramedics real-time feedback as they perform CPR on whether they are compressing deep enough or too shallow to help the patient. As medics struggle to save lives at high speed, this information can be the difference between saving a life or losing a patient and can lessen the damage done until the patient arrives at the hospital.

The monitors are used for heart attacks caused by a fully blocked blood vessel, called ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI). RPS co-owner David Waid explained that during a STEMI event, the heart muscle and tissue are dying without oxygenated blood, resulting in more damage as the seconds tick by.

In addition to providing more information, the new monitors have the ability to transmit the data regarding the patient's heart issues to the hospital. According to the paramedics at RPS, this means there is approximately a 10-second delay between taking the patient's stats and the time the doctor and hospital are receiving it. Under previous systems, the information was received by the doctor when the patient and ambulance arrived at the emergency room, often up to a 30-minute delay.

With that information in hand, doctors at the hospital can prepare to treat the issues before the patient even arrives at the hospital.

"What we're doing now is bypassing the emergency room," Waid said. "You go straight to the cath lab and they open that vessel up right away."

Although the monitors are expensive — they retail for about \$45,000 each — Waid said the company believes the investment is worth it, because it will increase patient survival and decrease damage to the heart.

The company averages 200 calls a day, transports an average of 160 patients each day and approximately 20 percent of those are cardiac-related.

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