

CPR device frees paramedics to give other care

By Kathryn Reed

It may not be a paramedic doing chest compressions when the ambulance arrives. Instead, it could be Auto-Pulse.

“It has definitely been a game changer in how we run our CPR calls,” South Lake Tahoe firefighter Scott Blasser told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Auto-Pulse will provide more consistent perfusion pressure across the board.”

It’s the size of a boogie board and is heavy, so it’s not something that would be carried by search and rescue crews.

A band is placed over the patient’s chest and the machine does compressions on the heart instead of an EMT or paramedic.



This shows a mock patient on the Auto-Pulse board with the compression strap on.
Photo/Provided

The devices are on South Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments’ three primary ambulances. They were bought earlier this year at a cost of about \$15,000 each.

It’s something that can be used on most any cardiac call. The

limitations of the machine are based on the size of the person – if they are too small or too large.

When a man who nearly drowned earlier this month in one of the canals in the Tahoe Keys was pulled from the water crews used the Auto-Pulse to help revive him.

South Tahoe Fire Chief Bruce Martin has been aware of the devices for about a decade and said they made a world of difference when he worked in Fremont.

“Now we have a machine that takes the place of human labor. It does it consistently and it doesn’t get tired,” Martin told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We think it contributes to the successful outcome in cardiac care.”

Blasser explained that the evolution of cardiopulmonary resuscitation is that compressions are more important than breaths. And that consistency and depth of the compressions is critical to the recovery of the patient. This machine and others like it can provide pressure and consistency better than a person.

This in turn allows the paramedic to be doing other things like administering drugs, working on wounds, starting an IV, intubation and other vital medical care.

It would also usually take two people to perform CPR because one person can only go so long, so they trade off.

“Given the circumstances we encounter, people have done CPR for an hour,” Martin said.

And if a battery runs out on the Auto-Pulse, manual labor is still possible.

Blasser said another good thing about Auto-Pulse is that is able to keep doing the compressions when the crews are lifting the patient onto a gurney or if they have to be turned.

So far, the Auto-Pulses is being used about a handful of times a month.

“It improves the quality of job we can do,” Blasser said.