

FIRST RESPONDERS SUPPORT LIFE SAVING EQUIPMENT BILL

Following the recent theft of Public Access Defibrillators in Louth and Wicklow, community first responders are now calling for cross-party support as a matter of urgency for a Life Saving Equipment Bill, which proposes penalties of up to five years imprisonment and fines of €50,000 for those who steal or damage defibrillators or life buoys.

The Life Saving Equipment Bill, which was initiated in 2017 by Senator Keith Swanick, proposes the introduction of strict penalties for those convicted of theft, or damage, to a defibrillator or life buoy. A number of such incidents have been reported countrywide in recent months and years, with the most recent being the theft of Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) in Louth and Wicklow from their heated cases in early December 2019.

CFR Ireland supported this Bill when it was first introduced by Senator Keith Swanick and his colleagues Diarmuid Wilson, Robbie Gallagher and Paul Daly on 5 July 2017.

However, now that the Bill has been stalled in the Houses of the Oireachtas, CFR Ireland is asking for support from communities in the following three-pronged campaign:

1. **Email local TDs and councillors**, asking them to apply pressure on behalf of their constituents. For names and contacts details of local representatives or TDs visit www.whoismytd.com/;
2. **Sign CFR Ireland's online petition** <http://chng.it/zNKcfTfx5j> requesting the Bill to be passed;
3. **Raise awareness on social media** by sharing the petition and sharing the image.

HELP TO RAISE AWARENESS

In a statement CFR Ireland said: "We know that all community first responders are as angry about these thefts. We wish to support Senator Keith Swanick again and help raise awareness with our



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Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) were stolen from their heated cases in Louth and Wicklow in early December 2019. (Images courtesy of Emergency Times)



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representatives that this Bill needs to be passed as a matter of urgency.

“There needs to be stiff penalties for damaging or stealing these lifesaving devices. Community first responders and other voluntary groups around the country have fundraised to purchase and install these lifesaving devices.”

Dr David Menzies, Medical Director of CFR Ireland said: “Damage to, or theft of a defibrillator installed for public use could be a death sentence for a patient, if it were not available for a patient in cardiac arrest as a result. It is that serious. Locking up AEDs is not the ideal solution – you wouldn’t lock up a fire extinguisher.”

In the event of a cardiac arrest, CPR and defibrillation within the first 10 minutes is the most important intervention. The patient’s chances of survival drop by 10% for every minute that treatment is delayed. There are estimated to be over 13,000 AEDs in Ireland.

For more information, email Dr David Menzies, Medical Director of CFR Ireland david.menzies@cfr.ie or John Fitzgerald, CFR Ireland Chair info@cfr.ie.



John Fitzgerald, Chairman of CFR Ireland, pictured at RESPOND 2019 – the National First Responder Network Conference.

SPECIFIC OFFENCES OF INTERFERING WITH LIFESAVING EQUIPMENT

This Act aims to provide for the following specific offences of interfering with lifesaving equipment and to provide for related matters, as follows:

1. *It shall be an offence to interfere with, cause damage to, alter, remove or modify a defibrillator or an AED, except in the performance of routine testing or maintenance, or during an identifiable medical emergency, which has been notified to the emergency services.*
2. *It shall be an offence to interfere with, cause damage to, alter, remove or modify, any marine safety device including life preservers, lifebuoys, throw rings, life boat, lines, ladders or safety harnesses, except in the performance of routine testing or maintenance, or during an identifiable medical or lifesaving emergency which has been notified to the emergency services.*
3. *A person found guilty of an offence under this Act shall be liable (a) on summary conviction, to a class A fine, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both, or (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €50,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or both.*

To view and download the Life Saving Equipment Bill 2017 Bill visit <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/bill/2017/92/eng/initiated/b9217s.pdf>