

Patient Safety Alert

Veterans Health Administration Warning System Published by VA Central Office

AL06-15

July 24, 2006

- Item:** Sealed, lead-acid batteries for external defibrillators supplied by non-OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) or second source suppliers. Second source suppliers include Alpha Source, Anybattery, R&D Batteries and Unipower, among others.
- Specific Incident:** A VA medical center reports multiple external defibrillators not functioning properly on battery mode after a limited number of discharges although the internal batteries were fully charged. Upon further investigation it was discovered that the second source batteries contain internal thermal breakers and heat generated by the battery after a limited number of discharges can trip the thermal breaker, temporarily disabling the defibrillator until the battery cools.
- Actions:**
1. By close of business July 25, 2006 identify external defibrillators in your facility powered by second source batteries and contact the battery supplier to determine if internal thermal breakers are incorporated into the battery.
 2. If the defibrillator battery incorporates an internal thermal breaker, replace it with a battery acquired directly from the defibrillator manufacturer (OEM), or if a second source battery is to be used, ensure that no thermal breaker is employed.
 3. In the interim if a replacement battery is not available:
 - (a) Instruct users and code response teams to plug in the defibrillator during a code if the defibrillator appears to fail to charge and discharge normally (temporary signage can assist).
 - (b) Assure code team defibrillators are equipped with a fully charged spare battery.
- Addl. Information:** Currently available information indicates external defibrillator OEM batteries do not contain the thermal breakers and are not affected.
- It is not recommended to change current external defibrillator testing protocol as a result of this Alert. Continue using the test protocol specified by the device manufacturer. Further guidance will be provided if necessary.
- Source:** VA Center for Engineering & Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) and Manufacturer
- Contact:** Paul Sherman at CEOSH (314)-543-6700