

Heart unit saves two

Four new heart monitor and treatment units have been credited with saving two lives in Lexington County.

The units, which cost approximately \$5,000 each, are now being used by the county ambulance service. Ambulance director John Driggers said Lexington County is one of only a handful of ambulance services in the state to use the machines.

The equipment can measure heart patterns on both electronic scope and a paper read-out and is capable of giving "shock" treatment to patients in cardiac arrest.

Driggers explained that the "shock" treatment can only be used by the ambulance crews after authorization has been obtained from a physician at a hospital emergency room. Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) are trained to operate the heart units and there is one on duty at all times at each of the county's four ambulance centers - West Columbia, Swansea, Irmo, and Batesburg.

Once radio and electrical hook-ups are completed, Driggers said, county EMT's will be able to send readings from the heart unit at the scene of an accident directly to a unit in the hospital where doctors can read the heart pattern and prescribe treatment.

Since the heart units have been in operation, Driggers said, they have traveled with the ambulances. Shock treatment has saved two lives, Driggers said.

By a save, he explained, "we mean we have delivered a viable patient to the hospital. It doesn't necessarily mean he can get up and walk out the next week."

Driggers called the new equipment part of the county ambulance program's effort to "bring part of the emergency room of a hospital to the street" for on-the-scene treatment.



Heart monitor

Lexington County emergency medical technician James Greene demonstrates one of four cardiac monitor-defibrillators now being used by the county's ambulance service. County officials attribute two "saves" to the heart treatment units, which have been in use on the county's ambulances for the past few weeks. Each cardiac unit can measure heart pattern on both scope and a paper read-out and is used, with doctor's permission, to perform "shock" treatment in attempts to revive persons in cardiac arrest.