THE SURVIVAL RATE of people experiencing sudden cardiac arrest is around 75 percent if their hearts are defibrillated within three minutes of the attack. Most patients die waiting for an ambulance, which takes, on average, 12 minutes. Automated external defibrillators (AEDs)—portable, relatively cheap, user-friendly versions of the bulky and costly machines used in ICUs—have helped close that gap. But Dr. Glenn W. Laub, co-founder of Defibtech, wants to close it further. AEDs, he believes, should be as commonplace and easy to use as fire extinguishers.

Defibtech's first device, the Lifeline, combined step-by-step, high-quality audio instruction; the ability to withstand 1,000 pounds of crushing force; and, most important, simplicity of construction and use—all at $1,000 less than its nearest competitor. It's a package that prompted MoMA to include the product in its 2005 exhibition "Safe: Design Takes on Risk." These innovations aside, the thought of delivering a high-voltage shock to someone's chest remains intimidating to many users, so Defibtech's new model tries to make things even easier. Not only is the new Lifeline View smaller and lighter than the original, but it adds an LCD video screen that supplements verbal instructions with video demonstrations. Sensors in the device provide users with "contextual-dependent information:" when to give CPR, where to put their hands, and whether their rate of compression is accurate. The View can even detect what the user is doing wrong and offer advice on how to change course.

"In a YouTube age, video is a natural thing," Laub says. "All the devices talk, but ours shows you what to do. During the stress of an emergency, the image can reassure you." —JASON SCHWARTZ

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The Lifeline View's LCD video screen and spoken instructions walk first responders through the defibrillation process.