

## Position Paper of the EU Red Cross National Societies on First Aid and Driving Licence

May 2008

Imagine a victim with severe bleeding following a road accident. If nobody applies pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding, even the most sophisticated or the quickest emergency service in the world will only arrive on the scene to certify death.

### WHY FIRST AID SHOULD BE PART OF A ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY:

- 57% of deaths from traffic collisions occur in the first few minutes of the crash
- Up to 85% of preventable pre-hospital deaths may be due to airway obstruction and occur before the arrival of the emergency services
- 22% occur during transport to the hospital or within the same day
- 21% occur within 30 days.

According to scientific studies, the number of people who die as a result of traffic accidents would be considerably reduced if a witness was able to act effectively before the arrival of the emergency services.

First aid training educates citizens on accident and injury prevention and gives them the skills to respond to major or minor emergencies by protecting the scene, alerting the emergency services and carrying out appropriate life-saving measures.

First aid is not only techniques. EU Red Cross National Societies consider first aid an act of humanity and therefore a key responsibility of global citizenship. Moreover, wisdom is not something that can be imparted to people through the law but through education.

EU Red Cross National Societies believe that everyone has the potential to save lives. First aid training is an effective way to raise awareness amongst the population about safety issues and prevention. When all drivers and more people learn how to prevent road accidents and what to do to help accident victims, more lives will be saved.

### FIRST AID – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

This is immediate help provided to a sick or injured person. It is concerned not only with physical injury or illness but also with other initial care including psychological support for people suffering emotional distress caused by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event (source: First Aid Policy of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – 2007).

First aid should be considered, not as an alternative to the intervention of the emergency services, but as a vital initial stage in the provision of effective and rapid intervention. Immediate First aid can contribute to a reduction in the severity of injury, and improve chances of survival.

Taking immediate action and applying the appropriate techniques during the first critical minutes can make the difference in saving lives.

## THE ADDED VALUE OF FIRST AID TRAINING

The Mission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies believe that First aid is a primary civic responsibility and that citizens should develop their skills in First aid so as to help others:

- **Building safer and healthier communities through first aid**

The Red Cross believes that First aid is a proven cost effective, safe and simple way to save lives during disasters and in day-to-day emergencies including road accidents.

First aid training is an investment to help individuals and communities to become more resilient to the effects of disasters and health crises. First aid helps to build stronger communities by building links and solidarity between people and supporting people to help themselves.

- **Raising awareness of road safety through first aid**

Since 2001, the EU Red Cross National Societies have collaborated on road safety campaigning with financial support from the European Commission. The campaigns have focused on promoting road safety awareness, First aid skills and good road safety practices, reaching millions of European citizens.

Advocacy has also played a key role using Red Cross/Red Crescent connections across Europe's 52 National Societies: their volunteers and staff facilitate and support an enabling environment for road safety and First aid in terms of behavioural change and impact. The Red Cross National Societies can also share years of experience in First aid training, in education and in its community and civil society engagement.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continues to strengthen its collaboration with academic and scientific bodies, and First aid and public health organizations to improve its life saving techniques and community health response. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is represented at the European Resuscitation Council and is an observer at the World Health Organization.

## WHAT IS FIRST AID TRAINING?

This is an approved programme of knowledge and skills in procedures and techniques that require little or no equipment and can be taught to the general public. It has a defined outcome and is provided by a qualified trainer or facilitator.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EU RED CROSS NATIONAL SOCIETIES TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR REDUCING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED AND INJURED ON THE ROADS

### 1. First aid training for all drivers

In all EU Member States, every candidate for a driving license should be educated in First aid and should have a valid First aid certificate that is not more than five years old. It is then recommended to follow a refresher course every five years.

### 2. First aid curriculum for drivers – minimum common curriculum to be adopted by EU Member States

A European First Aid Certificate already exists and is delivered across the European Union and in other countries of Europe by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The common standards of the training provide a working model for harmonization and quality across the Member States. The participant should have the right skills, behaviour and knowledge to perform effective First aid techniques. Based on its experience as a leading provider of First aid training, the Red Cross suggests the following areas to be part of the curriculum:

- Preventive road safety messages  
Road safety messages should be communicated alongside training on how to prevent accidents and how to deal with the consequences of irresponsible behaviour. For example, teaching a young motorcyclist about how to move an unconscious motorcyclist into a safe position until further help can be given, can go alongside promotion of helmets as an effective and obligatory measure against head trauma. Other safety measures, such as seat belt use, respect for speed limits, not drinking and driving can also be effectively built into a basic programme for road users.
- Protecting the scene to prevent further accidents and minimize the risk to those rendering assistance
- Summoning help - reporting the accident to the emergency services, giving relevant information
- Making an emergency removal from the scene of an injured person - when necessary and if possible
- Assessing the physical state - checking vital functions like consciousness, circulation and breathing as well as the psychological needs of those affected
- Responding to unconsciousness, breathing problems, visible bleeding, shock and offering psychological support, to enable the injured person to survive whilst waiting the arrival of the emergency services

### 3. First aid kits

It is recommended that a First aid kit and protective items (safety vest, triangle...) are included in every vehicle.

This position paper has been coordinated by the Red Cross/EU Office, which represents the National Red Cross Societies of the EU Member States and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to the EU institutions. For further information and clarification please contact:

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