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Defibrillators needed urgently for public places - Kennedy

DUBLIN NORTH'S Fianna Fail TD Michael Kennedy has called on the HSE to urgently address the need for defibrillators in public places and to ensure that at least one defibrillator is placed in certain public places, such as health centres, sports clubs, airports, shopping centres and rail stations.

After raising the issue with Minister for Health Mary Harney in the Dail, Deputy Kennedy said: "Over 5000 people died in Ireland last year from Sudden Cardiac Death and with our modern lifestyle it is likely that more and more people will suffer the same fate. As vice-chair of the Dail Arts, Sports and Tourism Committee, I have a particular concern for members of athletic and sports clubs who fall victim to this disease and statistics have shown that no person is immune to Sudden Cardiac Death."

"Fortunately, Minister for Health Mary Harney last year launched a Task Force on Sudden Cardiac Death and in a recent report the group identified a range of locations where incidence of cardiac arrest is high."

"These include health facilities, GP surgeries, airports, shopping centres, sports venues, bus/rail terminals, universities, gyms and fitness clubs and other major venues for public events."

"I am calling on the Minister for Health to instruct the HSE to immediately conduct a survey into the existence of defibrillators at the recommended locations. Where they are missing, I would urge the Minister to compel the relevant organisation to obtain one and train its staff to use it in the case of an emergency. I am also calling on the Minister to widen the scope of my proposed survey and add all schools, community centres and churches to the list of identified locations."

"I have been informed by the Minister that the HSE will be engaging in a promotion campaign in 2008 which is aimed at increasing the availability and awareness of defibrillators in public places," concluded Deputy Kennedy.