

## LOCAL GOLF INSIDER

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### Courses take safe route with new device

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Several years ago, Kirk Jensen was playing in a member-guest tournament at his private club in Edmonton, Alberta.

After a few holes, Jensen's foursome approached the first tee. Jensen noticed a man in his sixties, who was playing in another group, slumped over in his golf cart.

The man was having a massive heart attack.

Frantically, Jensen and the players in his group ran into the pro shop. The club had a defibrillator but no one knew how to use it, and the club was about 20 minutes from the nearest hospital. Thirty minutes later, paramedics arrived on the scene, but the man died.

"That was a very traumatic moment," Jensen said. "I knew him. He was on my men's league team. It was like, 'What more could we have done?'"

Sadly, such incidents are not uncommon on golf courses. Anthony Girardi, a golf course superintendent from Connecticut, wrote an article in 2000 that brought to light some harrowing statistics:

\* Golf courses are the fifth-most-likely place for cardiac arrest to occur.

\* An estimated 20 percent of all golf course facilities will have a cardiac emergency, the No. 1 cause of death at golf facilities worldwide.

Six months after seeing an acquaintance suffer a fatal heart attack at his own club, Jensen's father collapsed in front of him one night. Jensen's father was OK, but those two incidents led Jensen, owner/president of an Edmonton-based software company, to collaborate with GPS Industries on a global positioning system device that is mounted on golf carts.

The product uses GPS and wireless technology to help golfers determine distances, to help staff track carts and to make it easy for golfers to order food and drinks.

Jensen, though, is proudest of the system's easy-to-use emergency response feature. Many GPS systems have emergency messaging, but GPSI's product has a database feature that lets club personnel know if a doctor or emergency technician is at the club and where they are on the course, said Blake Ponuick, GPSI's vice president for sales and marketing.

If there's an emergency, pro shop personnel can send a message to every cart on the course, notifying players of the location of the emergency. If a doctor sees the message, critical minutes can be saved.

That might have helped avert the tragedy Jensen witnessed firsthand.

"I know there are cardiac doctors that are members of our club that were out there at that member-guest," Jensen said. "Nobody knew what to do, and nobody knew where they were."

The system is easy to use. A large button on the unit is pushed if medical help is needed.

A confirmation message appears on the screen, and once confirmed, a message is sent to the pro shop. Help is dispatched to the exact spot it's needed.

At the PGA Merchandise Show, where GPSI's product was unveiled in late January, Jensen was told another sad story.

A Calgary man let his son skip school the day after being cut from his hockey team. The father took his son to play golf. As they hit balls on the driving range, the boy's father had a heart attack and died.

"This little guy had just been cut from his hockey team, and his dad takes him to feel better and dies right in front of him," Jensen said. "That's as bad as it gets."

A handful of clubs have already signed on to use GPSI's technology, but no Texas course has the system.

For more information, go to [www.gpsindustries.com](http://www.gpsindustries.com).