

NEW BEDFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT



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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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See Also: N/A

OFFICERS SAVE CHOKING MAN'S LIFE

New Bedford, Massachusetts – New Bedford Police Officers John Dafonte (20 year veteran), William Sauve' (8 year veteran) and Alan Lord (3 years veteran) are credited with saving a man's life after performing the Heimlich Maneuver and abdominal thrusts to dislodge food that the man was choking on.

On September 2nd just after 9:30 P.M. a frantic citizen ran into New Bedford Police Station 3 in the north district for help to report that there was a man choking at the Dunkin' Donuts located at 807 Ashley Boulevard in New Bedford. Normally the Fire Department and EMS medics respond to these types of calls along with police but all the ambulances were busy with other calls. Although out of town ambulances were in the process of being called and the Fire Department was on the way, the officers had no time to wait.

They responded from Station 3 in the north district (located just down the street at 781 Ashley Boulevard) where they were doing reports to the nearby Dunkin' Donuts where the victim was choking. When officers arrived, the man was not breathing, turning blue and about to lose complete consciousness. The officers initially performed the Heimlich Maneuver however the food was too deeply lodged for this to work. As the man slipped into unconsciousness, the officers laid him on the floor on his back and performed aggressive abdominal thrusts (*used when the Heimlich Maneuver in unsuccessful*) until the piece of food that the man was choking on became dislodged. Officer John Dafonte was then able to sweep the food out of the victim's mouth, open up his airway, and allow his body to begin breathing along with the assistance of oxygen and breathing support techniques.

New Bedford EMS Captain Joseph Rebello wrote in a letter to his Chief that the officers' actions, "saved this man's life without a doubt and should be recognized..." adding, "there was no ambulance available at the time of the incident and I was at least 3-4 minutes away from the scene."

The officers involved never reported their heroic actions considering it to be just a part of their job so the officers' heroism went unreported until now. When the EMS Captain Rebello wrote a letter to his Chief however, that letter was forwarded to the police department and ultimately to the Deputy Chief in Charge of Patrol Operations, Kevin M. Hegarty. Deputy Chief Hegarty has since nominated all (3) officers for the department's highest award, the Lifesaving Ribbon, but Chief of Police Ronald E. Teachman will make the final determination.

This is yet another example of the life saving benefit of Mayor Scott W. Lang's decision to reopen the district police stations.