

No joke: Caterpillar workers save colleague during cardiac arrest

Monday

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PEORIA - The Columbus Day meeting was otherwise ordinary. As Mitch Tobias began to present to his fellow Caterpillar Inc. team members, Mark Whiting leaned back in his chair and began snoring.

The Construction Technology and Services topic was routine, one Whiting had been bored over before, and they thought he was joking again.

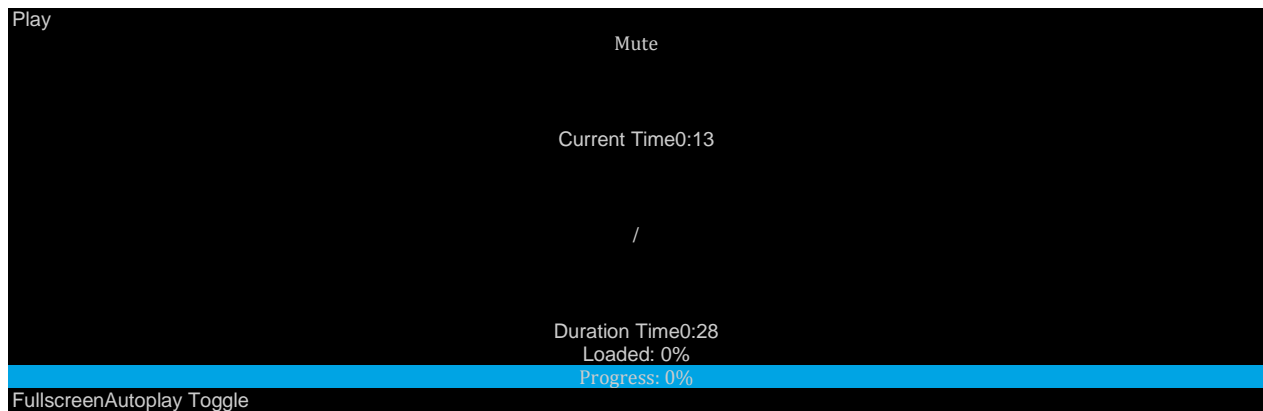
In reality, the 49-year-old had gone into cardiac arrest as the result of a previously undetected genetic condition.

"We didn't see it coming," Tobias said Monday as he and six other Caterpillar employees were recognized by Advanced Medical Transport for the life saving effort that ensued. "It was very normal. We were in mid-conversation and things changed quickly."

For the next slow-motion moments at an offsite meeting facility across the street from Caterpillar world headquarters, Tobias and the others - Allen DeClerk, Troy Arrington, Frank Campbell, Chad Brickner, Eric Spurgeon and Vijay Ramasamy - called for emergency help, performed CPR and administered a shock from an automated external defibrillator.

"All of us jumped in very quickly, no one hesitated," Tobias said. "We all had a job to do."

First responders arrived within a few minutes, and paramedics transported Whiting within 12 minutes to OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, where doctors nicknamed him "one percenter" - only 1 to 3 percent who suffer the same type of cardiac arrest survive, Whiting said.



"There were no warnings," said Whiting, who recently began working at home after weeks of recovery. "It definitely gives you a new perspective on training."

Ambulance service AMT has advocated CPR and AED training for everyone in the community as part of its Race to the Top program, effectively making bystanders such as those in the Caterpillar meeting into first-line responders in an attempt to improve sudden cardiac arrest resuscitation rates.

Most of the Caterpillar employees honored Monday received on-the-job training on the techniques.

Whiting's wife, Stephanie Whiting, said she has gained a new level of appreciation for that seemingly mundane task.

"If we get anything from this, I ask everyone to take the time to get trained," she said. "We feel incredibly blessed."

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