

FDNY Medics' Use of Defibrillator Batteries Questioned

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Courtesy of [The New York Post](#)

July 6, 2007 -- Queens jurors yesterday got a chilling account of how a vibrant mother and wife died - after FDNY medics allegedly used outdated batteries for a defibrillator.

Toni Ann Joline, 40, was returning from a wedding with her mother early on the morning of Aug. 12, 2000, when a truck crashed ahead of them and halted traffic on the Van Wyck Expressway.

Suddenly, Joline passed out. An ambulance responding to the accident was flagged down and two emergency medical technicians began to tend to her, her lawyer, Marc Reibman, said.

He told jurors the woman stopped breathing and her pulse couldn't be found, so the EMTs tried to use the defibrillator. But when they tried to deliver the lifesaving electric jolt to restart her heart, the machine didn't work.

Instead, it displayed the words "service mandatory." They tried the backup battery, but it didn't work either.

The batteries are supposed to be replaced after two years, but the first battery was 6 years old and the second one was 10, Reibman said.

"It's no fluke," he said. "Those batteries were that old. The city had no system for tracking how old the batteries were.

"By failing to track the age of batteries, they were playing Russian roulette with the lives of the people of the city of New York," Reibman said.

It took more than 30 minutes for the ambulance to get Joline to Jamaica Hospital, where the emergency-room staff used a working defibrillator and got her heart beating again.

But her brain had been deprived of oxygen too long. She died eight months later.

There were 36 other occasions when defibrillators didn't work because of batteries past their expiration dates, said Reibman.

"The city should have known," he said.

As he listened from the front row of the Queens Supreme courtroom, 46-year-old Richard Joline's eyes welled with tears as he relived the painful memory of how his wife died.

Sosimo Fabian, a lawyer representing the city, told the jurors the woman went into cardiac arrest and it took a team of doctors, medications and other measures to get her heart going again.

"I'm not here to tell you the city of New York was perfect," Fabian said. "The defibrillator [manufacturers] are in the business of selling batteries, and they want their batteries sold.

"Her cardiac arrest was not caused by the city," he said.