

DAILY NEWS

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for seniors only

PUSHING THE PANIC BUTTON

By Deborah Harkins

August 19, 2001 – "I've fallen, and I can't get up!" the old lady quavered, her tone of huffy indignation oddly hilarious. For people who might otherwise be unable to get help, however, such devices are anything but funny.

LifeFone was one of the first to market a "personal response device," equipment designed to rescue subscribers in a medical emergency.

Most systems work the way LifeFone's does: Subscribers wear a pendant or bracelet bearing a "panic button" they can press in a medical crisis. The button connects with a radio-size console hooked up to the subscriber's telephone line.



LifeFone's console dials the system's emergency Response Center and an operator asks, "Do you need help?" (The console can waft the operator's voice through most two- or three-room apartments.) The LifeFone operator pulls the subscriber's doctor-validated medical history up on his computer screen; if he can't hear the subscriber's voice, he immediately follows whatever emergency procedure that has been set up.

Some people leave instructions that LifeFone call friends or neighbors first; most, however, want the operator to summon professional help – like paramedics – immediately. Friends can keep a set of the subscriber's keys, so the paramedics don't have to break the lock to get in. The subscriber can also hide a key and LifeFone will keep a confidential record of where it's hidden.

LifeFone will also call the local fire department or whatever other emergency service the patient has instructed it to call, and notifies the subscriber's doctor – and whoever else has been listed – if he or she is taken to the hospital.

LifeFone's monthly monitoring costs less than \$1 a day.
For more information, call 1-800-882-2280