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CBS News Helps Red Cross Transport Blood into Haiti

WASHINGTON, January 15, 2010 – The American Red Cross needed help getting blood into Haiti this week and CBS News flew to the rescue.

The Red Cross has an agreement with the United Nations Mission Hospital in Haiti to send 13 units of blood every three weeks. The hospital called, asking for additional blood because of the medical emergencies in Haiti after this week's earthquake.

The National Inventory Management group placed an immediate call to Quick International Courier about the likelihood of getting blood into Port au Prince with the airport virtually being closed. Quick works with the Red Cross on blood shipments by air, and often coordinates emergency shipments such as this one.

At the same time, Quick was contacted by CBS News to see if they could help determine the best way to get CBS staff and equipment into Port au Prince. Quick arranged to charter a plane for CBS and asked the network if they would be willing to carry four boxes of Red Cross blood with them to Haiti. CBS agreed.

The CBS flight could not get clearance to fly directly to Port au Prince, so they made arrangements to fly into Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. The CBS crew waited an additional 30 minutes while the Red Cross blood was transported from the New England Blood Region facility in Dedham to an airport in New Jersey and loaded onto the CBS flight.

The CBS crew and their precious Red Cross cargo arrived in Santo Domingo Wednesday, where the network folks then chartered another plane to take them to Port au Prince on Thursday. They agreed to carry the blood on the second flight and delivered it to waiting United Nations personnel upon arrival. The blood was then delivered to the hospital where staff started using it almost immediately.

"Patients at the UN Mission Hospital needed this blood," said Dr. Richard Benjamin, Chief Medical Officer." With the chaos and devastation we've seen in Haiti, we know the delivery of this blood by CBS News was truly a lifesaving gift. On behalf of the Red Cross and the patients who needed this blood, we thank you."

The American Red Cross is meeting the needs of this tragedy through current supplies. At this time we do not anticipate the need for a special donor appeal to support our efforts. As always, blood donors are encouraged to call 1-800-RED CROSS or visit us online at redcrossblood.org to make an appointment.