

Media Alert



**American
Red Cross**

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givebloodgivelife.org

Winter Weather Impacts Blood Donations through the American Red Cross

ST. PAUL, Minn. (December 10, 2009) – Severe winter weather that bore down on the Midwest has impacted the steady flow of blood and platelet donations through the American Red Cross as blood drives were cancelled and donors could not safely travel to their donation appointments.

Seven blood drives in the North Central Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross were cancelled yesterday resulting in nearly 400 fewer donations. The North Central Region serves 111 hospitals in Minnesota, western Wisconsin and eastern South Dakota.

As area residents dig out from the snow and ice, and traveling is deemed to be safe, the American Red Cross urges eligible donors to make a blood or platelet donation appointment within the next few days to help replenish lifesaving blood supplies. Platelet and type O negative blood donations are especially needed.

Type O negative is the universal blood type and can potentially be transfused to anyone. A recent surge in patient usage has increased the need of this blood type.

With a shelf life of just 5 days, platelet donations are constantly needed, especially when severe weather affects the normal steady flow of donations. Platelets are used to help cancer patients, who rely on transfusions following chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

How to Donate Blood

Simply call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit givebloodgivelife.org to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license, or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental permission in some states), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

About the American Red Cross

Governed by volunteers and supported by giving individuals and communities, the American Red Cross is the single largest supplier of blood products to hospitals throughout the United States. While local hospital needs are always met first, the Red Cross also helps ensure no patient goes without blood no matter where or when they need it. In addition to providing nearly half of the nation's blood supply, the Red Cross provides relief to victims of disaster, trains millions in lifesaving skills, serves as a communication link between U.S. military members and their families, and assists victims of international disasters or conflicts.

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The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give blood.™