

Disasters, Blood Donation and You

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 led to a tremendous outpouring of generosity on the part of the American public, including the donation of blood.

Nationally, more than 475,000 units were collected for disaster victims in just a few weeks. Normal blood needs consumed most of those units. Why? Because blood is rarely need for such disasters.

- It is a natural instinct to want to give blood for a visible emergency, and donors who have never given blood before usually respond in large numbers.
- In general, physical disasters do not lead to large-scale needs for blood transfusion. Most victims die or escape the need for blood.
- Even in an emergency, the blood already tested and on the shelf must be used first.

Yet there has never been a time in our nation's history when your blood has been need more!

- Blood is urgently needed every day in order to meet the needs of patients.
- Right now, the need for lifesaving blood transfusions is on the increase.
- More and more longtime blood donors are no longer able to donate blood. They've done their part, now it's time to step up to the plate.
- While blood donations peaked across the U.S. in the days following September 11, few of these donors returned during the rest of the year.
- Blood inventories have generally reverted to near critical levels again for most parts of the country.
- Red blood cells have a shelf life of only 42 days, so new reserves must be added to hospital inventories every day.

What You Can Do

- Become a regular blood donor. There are emergencies every day of varying magnitude. By being part of a corps of dedicated blood donors who give on a regular basis, you can help make sure enough blood will be on the hand, both for everyday blood needs and for unexpected tragedies.
- Pick some significant days - like a birthday or anniversary - and donate blood around those dates. You'll be helping to spread blood collections out over the course of the year.
- Bring a friend, especially someone who's never donated blood before.
- Spread the word that there's a constant need for blood donation.

We'll be counting on your help. If you would like to learn more about becoming a regular donor, contact the American Red Cross Blood Services - New England Region at 1-800-843-3500, or log on to www.newenglandblood.org.

Whether the disaster you're responding to is a hurricane, a train derailment, a cancer patient receiving chemotherapy or a premature infant, you can make a difference in someone's life. By giving blood today, you'll be helping to make our community safer for tomorrow.



American Red Cross