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U.S. BLOOD SUPPLY CURRENTLY ADEQUATE TO HANDLE DEMANDS RESULTING FROM HURRICANE RITA

Future Appointments Are Encouraged to Maintain Supply

TACOMA, WA - The AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism has determined that blood supplies and current inventory levels are meeting hospital needs in the wake of Hurricane Rita, which continues to affect Gulf Coast and other southern states. However, the task force is concerned that future supplies may dwindle because blood has a shelf life of only 42 days. To maintain a healthy blood supply level, the task force recommends that people who would like to help should call their local blood banks to schedule an appointment for the coming weeks and months.

"The transfusion medicine community has concluded that local blood banks located in the path of Hurricane Rita have enough blood to meet medical need," said Donald Doddridge, chairman of the Interorganizational Task Force. "To ensure that we have an adequate supply of blood to meet patient needs across the country, the task force recommends that individuals who wish to help contact their local hospital or blood center and schedule appointments in the near future."

The need for blood will be ongoing, especially over the next few weeks, as disaster victims require additional care, as deferred elective surgeries are rescheduled, or if there should be any further emergencies. The task force encourages donors and potential donors to make giving blood a regular part of their lives. Those interested in donating blood may contact the following organizations to find a local blood collection site and to schedule an appointment:

- AABB: www.aabb.org; 1-866-FROM-YOU (1-866-376-6968)
- America's Blood Centers: www.americasblood.org; 1-888-USBLOOD (1-888-872-5663)
- American Red Cross: www.givelife.org; 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543)

The task force was formed in January 2002 to make certain that blood collection efforts in response to domestic disasters and acts of terrorism run smoothly and are managed properly, with the public receiving clear and consistent messages regarding the status of America's blood supply. It is composed of representatives from various blood services and associations, government agencies, and commercial entities who work together to try to ensure that facilities maintain safe and adequate inventories at all times in preparation for disasters, and have a mechanism in place to assess the need for collections and/or transportation of blood should a disaster occur.

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AABB serves as the designated coordinating entity for the Interorganizational task force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism. In addition to AABB, members include: AdvaMed, America's Blood Centers, American Association of Tissue Banks, American Hospital Association, American Red Cross, Armed Services Blood Program, Blood Centers of America/hemera, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, College of American Pathologists, Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration, National Marrow Donor Program and the Plasma Protein Therapeutics Association.

In the event of an emergency situation, AABB immediately convenes a meeting of task force representatives. Local blood center(s) are responsible for ascertaining medical need based on casualty estimates using pre-determined formulas, assessing available local supply, and communicating that information to the task force.

In a disaster, the first priorities of the task force are to:

- Verify and communicate to the blood community the medical need for blood;
- Identify sites with existing excess blood inventory;
- Determine the need, if any, for blood shipment and the logistics of such shipments; and
- Develop public messages and facilitate the discussion of donor issues.

About Cascade Regional Blood Services

Since 1946, Tacoma-Pierce County Blood Bank dba Cascade Regional Blood Services has served the South Puget Sound area and surrounding counties as an independent, volunteer support, not-for-profit regional blood resource.

About AABB

Established in 1947, AABB (formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks) is an international, not-for-profit association dedicated to the advancement of science and the practice of transfusion medicine and related biological therapies. The association is committed to improving health by developing and delivering standards, accreditation and educational programs and services that optimize patient and donor care and safety. AABB membership consists of approximately 1,800 institutions and 8,000 individuals, including physicians, scientists, administrators, medical technologists, nurses, researchers, blood donor recruiters and public relations personnel. Members are located in all 50 states and 80 countries.

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